

EVALUATION REPORT

Vietnam Economic and Environmental Management Program

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings and conclusions of the Evaluation Team tasked to evaluate the Vietnam Economic and Environmental Management Program (VEEM). VEEM has been co-funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), with program implementation beginning in October 1997, and program activities scheduled to end in March 2002.

The Evaluation Team was made up of two consultants independently contracted by IDRC, each responsible for the evaluation of one of VEEM's two components. The presentation of findings and conclusions in this report has, unfortunately, been hampered by a lack of information and analysis provided on the Environmental Component prior to the report's final submission date.

Development Context

The opening-up of the Vietnamese economy since 1986 has created a plethora of challenges, including a lack of in-depth understanding amongst many Vietnamese policy-makers and senior officials of the impact of trade liberalization on the Vietnamese economy, and of the costs and benefits of alternative routes to trade liberalization. These challenges have been compounded by the historic compartmentalization of Vietnamese research institutes by Government of Vietnam (GOV) ministries, a lack of collaboration amongst research institutes, the limited empirical research capacities of economic researchers and policy-makers alike, and a lack of understanding by GOV policy-makers of the potential of international research practices to help overcome these challenges.

At the same time, environmental degradation in Vietnam has become increasingly evident, with a natural resource situation characterized by high rural populations, and a degrading resource base. Increasing competition for the scarce and diminishing resources needed for local subsistence, including competition from commercial investments linked to international market demands, has exacerbated resource pressures. While GOV is very concerned about natural resource management in Vietnam, the tools to design and implement improved policy responses are poorly developed.

To address these challenges, Vietnam has needed to strengthen its indigenous research and analytical capacities to utilize modern methods of economic analysis and environmental management. It is within this context that VEEM has been developed and implemented.

Originally a Cdn\$2,000,000 program co-financed equally by IDRC and CIDA, delays in program development and implementation resulted in increased program costs, and an increase in the two agencies' contributions to Cdn\$1,230,000 and Cdn\$1,200,000 respectively. Additional IDRC funds were also provided from outside of the VEEM budget to cover increased overhead/administrative costs resulting from the program's extension.

The goal of VEEM has been to support Vietnam's reform process by strengthening the capacity of the government to develop and implement sound, equitable, and environmentally-sustainable economic and social policies. The purpose of VEEM has been to strengthen the capacity of Vietnamese researchers and research institutes to conduct policy-relevant research in the areas of economic reform and environmental management.

Evaluation Expectations/Methodology

Terms of Reference (TORs) for the Evaluation Team tasked it to:

- assess the extent to which VEEM has achieved its objectives;
- assess the effectiveness of the design and operation of VEEM;
- describe and assess the structure and vitality of the research networks created by VEEM; and
- identify key channels for VEEM-sponsored research to influence policy in Vietnam.

The methodology used in undertaking the evaluation included a review of program documentation, attendance at VEEM workshops and meetings, project site visits, and interviews. The evaluation was undertaken by a two-person team, as follows:

- Gary Miller: Evaluation Team Leader, and Economic Component Evaluator; and
- Nguyen Cong Thanh: Environmental Component Evaluator.

Performance Highlights

Measured by the achievement of its objectives, VEEM has been a success. The program has:

- designed, executed, and coordinated multi-disciplinary applied-policy research projects with the participation of relevant Vietnamese research institutes.
- undertaken the capacity-building of individual researchers through training workshops and technical assistance. This has resulted in an increased capacity of Vietnamese researchers to design and implement research activities demonstrating a marked improvement in quality and policy relevance over previous efforts.
- undertaken networking, policy workshops, and dissemination activities resulting in extensive peer consultation and review. Program results have been presented in journals, academic fora, and international conferences.
- supported the provision of policy recommendations to policy-makers through policy workshops, dissemination activities, and personal interventions by VEEM members with policy-makers. Many of the recommendations provided have been incorporated into government policies, documents, planning frameworks, and decision-making processes.

The capacity-building of Vietnamese researchers has been VEEM's principal achievement. Significant progress has been achieved in developing individual researchers' capacities in research design, coordination/networking, implementation, and reporting. This capacity-building has left Vietnamese researchers and research institutes far more capable of undertaking effective applied research post-VEEM than they were prior to the implementation of the program. This focus on capacity-building has, however, contributed to program delays that have had a negative impact on the value of some of the program's final results.

A key component of the capacity-building achieved has been the strengthening of Vietnamese research networks. VEEM researchers now consider the undertaking of research without a networking component almost inconceivable. This perspective, also held by heads of research institutes involved in VEEM, bodes well for the future of research networks in Vietnam.

Although limited, the impact of VEEM research upon policy formulation in Vietnam has been clear, with VEEM results finding their way into numerous policies and government decisions. The quality/utility of these results has, however, sometimes been lower than it might have been, a situation influenced by the program's capacity-building focus and by shortcomings in program management.

VEEM's program design and structure have proven generally effective, with the enthusiastic engagement of key individuals proving key to the successes achieved. Significant shortcomings have been encountered, nonetheless, in terms of overall monitoring and reporting; these shortcomings, in combination with a tardiness to address major management problems once identified, have contributed to significant program delays, with their attendant financial and research-value costs. Increased attention to monitoring, as well as to internal communications, the functioning of management structures and procedures, and relationship-building (taking into consideration cross-cultural influences), could have helped to avoid some of these challenges.

In summary, VEEM has supported significant capacity-building of individual Vietnamese researchers and research institutes while strengthening research networks and demonstrating the relevance of policy research to policy-making in Vietnam. VEEM has met the relatively limited objectives that it set itself, and serves as a model from which much can be learned about capacity-building, research networking, and the interface between multi-disciplinary applied-policy research projects and policy-making.

IDRC involvement in Vietnam will continue through the Vietnam Economic Research Network project and the CBNRM Project. Possible future channels for research for these or other projects in Vietnam are outlined in Appendix A of the report. Proposed economic research possibilities include either a continued focus on trade liberalization and competitiveness issues, or a shifting in focus to labour market issues. Proposed environmental management research possibilities continue to focus on strategies for sustainable coastal resource exploitation using community-based natural resource management methods.

Lessons Learned / Recommendations

1. The broader context within which a program is to be implemented must be understood prior to program development. An analysis of the capacities of potential partner institutes must be undertaken, including an analysis of the current and future workloads of key individuals, in order to be confident of the ability of the institute and its key individuals to commit themselves fully to the program.
2. Clear program visions and strategies must be developed and established prior to the design and approval of individual component projects if coordination, networking, influencing of policy-makers, and overall program impact are to be optimized.
3. Roles and procedures for the identification, development, approval, execution, and coordination of projects must be clearly-established and understood by all program partners and management bodies prior to program start-up. Management objectives, procedures, responsibilities, and schedules must also be clearly laid-out and pursued rigorously throughout the life of the program. Effective inter-organizational communications are key to this endeavour, and must be pursued consistently.
4. Program management should ensure that work taskings are allocated amongst team members in such a manner as to ensure their timely and effective completion.

5. The time required to undertake data collection and surveys must be determined as accurately as possible, and reflected in project timelines. Socio-political considerations must be taken into consideration in undertaking this determination.
6. Objectives and strategies for the addressing of crosscutting themes must be clearly identified and spelled out in program planning documents. Management structures and procedures for ensuring the ongoing addressing of those themes must be established.
7. Future research programs should include a significant capacity-building component, including technical assistance and training activities provided by international experts. This technical assistance could include study tours of other countries, as well as the funding of short-term fellowships for researchers at international research institutes; such fellowships might prove particularly valuable if undertaken near the end of the program, when researchers could derive maximum benefit from them.
8. Participation in training workshops should be limited to a small number of individuals from the same types of organizations (e.g. all from research institutes, or all from government), thereby permitting more focused and relevant training than would otherwise be possible.
9. When planning research programs that include capacity-building activities, the potential negative impacts of those activities upon other program objectives and activities must be taken into account.
10. Future research programs in Vietnam should be undertaken in close coordination with other donors and research institutes, to ensure that new research does not duplicate research efforts already underway or completed by others, and contributes to a broad-based strategy for a coordinated country research program. The establishment of formal research coordination mechanisms between donors, government, and Vietnamese research institutes should be supported.
11. Future research programs in Vietnam should include the establishing/strengthening of research networks as a key objective. Activities should include the identification of key researchers as network participants, the establishment of strong and formal networking mechanisms, the bringing of younger researchers into the networks, and the provision of ongoing technical assistance, as required.
12. Future research programs should include highly-influential persons within their programming and/or management structures, to maximize possibilities for the successful presentation of policy recommendations to policy-makers.
13. Separate “technical” and “policy-making” workshops should be organized, with the appropriate experts invited to each. Timeframes and agendas should permit in-depth, detailed discussions on research findings.
14. Dissemination strategies should focus on activities occurring throughout the life of the program, not solely on the dissemination of Final Reports and data at program-end. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that interim reports and data are of a high quality before they are disseminated. Disseminated reports and documents should, whenever

- possible, also be published in English. Dissemination strategies should also include provisions for a website for the posting of program reports, data, and documentation.
15. A thorough benefit-cost analysis should be undertaken prior to deciding on the inclusion of separate sectoral components within the same program structure. Alternative organizational and management structures should be analyzed.
 16. Socio-political, cultural, and professional influences that could impact upon program management should be identified during program planning, and responsive mechanisms developed. Recognition and, if possible, the addressing of such factors should be pursued throughout the life of the program.
 17. Strict monitoring and reporting regimes must be clearly-established in program planning documents, and implemented conscientiously from the very beginning of the program. Formal monitoring structures such as performance review frameworks are critical in this respect.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACCT	La Francophonie
CA	IDRC-CIDA Contribution Agreement
CAC	Component Advisory Committees
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
ECAC	Economic Component Advisory Committee
EnCAC	Environmental Component Advisory Committee
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FF	Ford Foundation
GOV	Government of Vietnam
GSO	General Statistics Office
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IE	Institute of Economics
IR	Inception Report
MBRP	Management of Biological Resources in Tam Giang Lagoon Project
MIMAP	Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies Project
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, War Invalids, and Social Affairs
MOSTE	Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NEA	National Environment Agency
PMRC	Prime Minister's Research Commission
PSC	Program Steering Committee
PTL	Project Team Leader
RCFL	Research Center for Female Labour
TDP	Trade Database Project
TLCP	Trade Liberalization and Competitiveness Project
TORs	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VEEM	Vietnam Economic and Environmental Management Program
VISED	Vietnam Sustainable Economic Development Project

Main Report

1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings and conclusions of the Evaluation Team tasked to evaluate the Vietnam Economic and Environmental Program (VEEM). VEEM has been a \$2,430,000 program co-funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Implementation of VEEM began in October 1997. Program activities are scheduled to terminate in March 2002.

The Evaluation Team was made up of two consultants independently contracted by IDRC, each responsible for the evaluation of one of VEEM's two components. The presentation of findings and conclusions in this report has, unfortunately, been hampered by a lack of information and analysis provided on the Environmental Component prior to the report's submission date.

This evaluation was carried out between October 2001 and January 2002.

All dollar figures in this report are in Canadian dollars.

2 PROGRAM PROFILE

2.1 Development Context

A key aspect of political and economic reform in Vietnam since 1986 has been the opening-up of the Vietnamese economy and its integration into the global economy. This development has provided significant new opportunities for the Vietnamese economy, resulting in the 1990's in one of the highest economic growth rates in the world. This opening-up of the Vietnamese economy has, however, created a plethora of challenges, including a lack of in-depth understanding amongst many Vietnamese policy-makers and senior officials of the impact of trade liberalization on the Vietnamese economy, and of the costs and benefits of alternative routes to trade liberalization. These challenges have been compounded by the historic compartmentalization of Vietnamese research institutes by Government of Vietnam (GOV) ministries, a lack of collaboration amongst research institutes, the limited empirical research capacities of economic researchers and policy-makers alike, and a lack of understanding by GOV policy-makers of the potential of international research practices to help overcome those challenges.

At the same time, environmental degradation in Vietnam has become increasingly evident, with a natural resource situation characterized by high rural populations, and a degrading resource base. Increasing competition for the scarce and diminishing resources needed for local subsistence, including competition from commercial investments linked to international market demands, has exacerbated resource pressures. While local experiences vary, natural resource management is generally weak, relying largely still on centralized policy directives that are often implemented differently in neighboring districts. While GOV is very concerned about natural resource management in Vietnam, the tools to design and implement improved policy responses are poorly developed.

To address these challenges, Vietnam has needed to strengthen its indigenous research and analytical capacities to utilize modern methods of economic analysis and environmental management. In the economic sector, a better knowledge of the determinants and implications of Vietnam's international trading relationships has been required, as well as increased knowledge of the benefits of liberalization. In the environment sector, the development of interdisciplinary research skills to address complex issues of natural resource degradation has been required. It is within this context that VEEM has been developed and implemented.

2.2 Program Overview

2.2.1 Background

Between 1993 and 1996, IDRC and CIDA funded the Vietnam Sustainable Economic Development Project (VISED), with the objective of supporting economic and social reform in Vietnam. Through VISED, Vietnam's research and analysis capabilities were strengthened in the areas of economics, environment, science and technology, and institutional and legal reform. A 1995 Performance Review of VISED concluded that the project was being implemented effectively, and that the networks established through the project were effective. The Performance Review identified the capacity-building of institutes and individual researchers as a key component of the project.

Following the completion of VISED, and given its success, IDRC and CIDA agreed to develop a more focused follow-on research program. This new program, the Vietnam Economic and Environmental Management Program, would have two components – one economic, and one environmental. VEEM's objective would be to develop Vietnam's research and analytical capabilities, encourage applied research activities supporting decision-making by Vietnamese policy-makers, and promote research and policy linkages between Vietnam and other countries, including Canada.

A VEEM Contribution Agreement (CA) was signed by IDRC and CIDA in April 1997. This agreement was followed in August 1997 by the formalization of a Letter of Collaboration between IDRC and Vietnam's Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment (MOSTE).

2.2.2 Expectations

First identified in the CA, VEEM's goal and purpose have since been modified, as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| <i>Goal:</i> | to support Vietnam's reform process by strengthening the capacity of the government to develop and implement sound, equitable, and environmentally-sustainable economic and social policies. |
| <i>Purpose:</i> | to strengthen the capacity of Vietnamese researchers and research institutes to conduct policy-relevant research in the areas of economic reform and environmental management. |

From the very beginning of the program, the focus of research to be conducted by the Economic Component was identified as the following: trade liberalization policies in Vietnam; the nature of the adjustment and benefits facing Vietnam as it opens its borders to trade; efficient policies for achieving liberalization; and Vietnam's ability to compete in world markets. This research would be implemented through the undertaking of one major project and a number of smaller projects.

The focus of the Environmental Component was identified as the development of strategies for sustainable coastal resource exploitation. The research program would examine existing patterns of exploitation and their impact on natural resources, and identify patterns that increase productivity whilst ensuring the viability and long-term sustainability of resources. Research would be carried out through one major project and a number of smaller projects.

In addition to its economic and environmental components, VEEM was also to have two crosscutting themes: environmental sustainability, and gender.

VEEM was originally planned as a three-year program. The first year of the program would focus largely on the development, approval, and start-up of research projects. The last two years of the program would focus on the monitoring and evaluation of projects, the provision of technical assistance, and the dissemination of project results. Amongst the milestones identified in VEEM's March 1998 Inception Report (IR) were the following:

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1997 | First Program Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting. Approval of the major project in each component. |
| 1998 | Second, third, and fourth PSC Meetings. Allocation of all research funds. |
| 1999 | Fifth and sixth PSC Meetings. Monitoring of progress. |
| 2000 | Seventh, eighth, and ninth PSC Meetings. Final technical reports prepared, with plans made for their publication. International conferences held, to present and discuss the final research results of the major project from each component. |

VEEM's expected results, as most recently modified, are as follows:

Outputs

- design a series of complementary research projects to support policy for economic reform and environmental management;
- execute individual projects by coordinating the research activities of numerous institutes and using a multi-disciplinary approach;
- engage international experts to train Vietnamese researchers and improve the quality of research design and research results;
- undertake peer consultation and review in research and policy debate, both in Vietnam and in the region; and
- make policy recommendations and present them to policy-makers.

Outcomes

- introduce strategic coordination of policy research and development;
- strengthen the ability of researchers, institutes, and policy-makers to do research to support policy development;
- strengthen research networks; and
- conduct research leading to policy recommendations for economic reform and environmental management.

Impact

- increase Vietnam's ability to design and implement effective economic reform and environmental policy.

2.2.3 Organizational Structure

VEEM's organizational structure has been headed by a Program Steering Committee (PSC), comprised of representatives of IDRC, MOSTE, CIDA, the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), the Institute of Economics (IE), and the National Environment Agency (NEA). Each of the two components has had a Component Advisory Committee (CAC), to help develop research projects, monitor implementation, and evaluate and disseminate project results and policy recommendations. Individual research projects have been led by a Team Leader, reporting to IDRC, MOSTE, PSC, and the CACs.

2.3 **Program Achievements**

VEEM implementation began with the holding of the first PSC meeting in October 1997. That meeting saw the formal approval of the major project in each component: the Trade Liberalization and Competitiveness in Vietnam Project (TLCP), and the Management of Biological Resources in Tam Giang Lagoon Project (MBRP). Activities in both projects commenced almost immediately.

Approval of further research projects was slow. In the Economic Component, the second project was approved in September 1998, and the final five projects in December 1999. In the Environmental Component, four projects were approved in March 1999, and another four in December 1999. These delays in project development led to the decision to extend the termination date of the program to end-2001. The first two Economic Component projects, and all nine Environmental Component projects, were completed in 2001. The remaining five Economic Component projects are due to be completed by March 2002.

Major VEEM milestones have been as follows:

April 1997	IDRC-CIDA Contribution Agreement signed.
August 1997	IDRC-MOSTE Letter of Collaboration formalized. Extension of VEEM termination date to December 2000.
October 1997	1 st PSC Meeting; approval of TLCP and MBRP.
September 1998	3 rd PSC Meeting; approval of one economic project.
March 1999	4 th PSC Meeting; approval of four environmental projects.
December 1999	5 th PSC Meeting; approval of five economic projects and four environmental projects.
February 2000	Extension of VEEM termination date to December 2001.
May 2001	Final Workshop: MBRP.
October 2001	Final Workshop: smaller environmental projects.
November 2001	Final Workshop: TLCP and Trade Database Project.
November 2001	Final Workshop: all Environmental Component projects.
November 2001	Extension of VEEM termination date to March 2002.
March 2002	<i>Final Workshop: five smaller economic projects. Program termination.</i>

2.4 **Budget**

Total funding for VEEM was established in the CA at \$2,000,000, with equal co-funding to be provided by IDRC and CIDA.

In 1997, IDRC submitted through Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade a request for \$300,000 in La Francophonie (ACCT) funding. In May 1999, ACCT, which after eighteen months had still not approved the IDRC proposal, informed IDRC that it would only receive ACCT funding if all ACCT-funded research could be completed by end-1999. IDRC, considering this deadline unfeasible, thereafter withdrew its request for ACCT funding. VEEM teams had in the meantime, however, already begun the development of a number of project proposals based upon the anticipated ACCT funding. This left the program in a position where it had to either discard those proposals, or secure additional funding. IDRC and CIDA subsequently agreed to increase their VEEM contributions to \$1,230,000 and \$1,200,000 respectively, thereby making up for the loss of the ACCT funding. IDRC also committed itself to contributing funds from outside the VEEM budget to support the extended duration of the VEEM office in Hanoi.

3 EVALUATION PROFILE

3.1 General

Terms of Reference (TORs) for the Evaluation Team tasked it to:

- assess the extent to which VEEM is achieving its objectives;
- assess the effectiveness of the design and operation of VEEM;
- describe and assess the structure and vitality of the research networks created by VEEM; and
- identify key channels for VEEM-sponsored research to influence policy in Vietnam.

This Evaluation Report is provided in response to those TORS. Key channels for VEEM-sponsored research are attached at Appendix A. The Evaluation TORs are attached at Appendix B.

3.2 Methodology

The methodology used in undertaking the evaluation was as follows:

1. *Document Review:*
 - a. literature review;
 - b. review of VEEM files, IDRC Hanoi; and
 - c. review of VEEM files, Canadian Embassy, Hanoi.
2. *Attendance at VEEM Workshops/Meetings:*
 - a. Environmental Component Project Review Workshop, Nha Trang, 3-5 October 2001;
 - b. IDRC Workshop on Survey Methodology for Manufacturing Firms, Hanoi, 12-17 November 2001;
 - c. Ford Foundation Project Coordination Board Meeting, Hanoi, 13 November 2001;

- d. Environmental Management for Coastal and Wetlands Communities Workshop, Hanoi, 26-27 November 2001; and
 - e. Trade Liberalization and Competitiveness of Selected Manufacturing Industries in Vietnam Workshop, Hanoi, 28 November 2001.
3. *Project Site Visits:*
- a. Retrogression of Environment and Hydrobiological Resources at Nai Swamp Project site, Nha Trang, October 2001;
 - b. Preliminary Assessment of Public Participation in Mangrove Forest Management Project site, Can Gio District, October 2001; and
 - c. Study on Biodiversity Protection of Tidal Wetlands in Haiphong Project site, Tien Lang District, January 2002.
4. *Interviews:* as per the list attached at Appendix C.

3.3 Evaluation Team

It was originally planned for the evaluation to be undertaken by a three-person team consisting of a Team Leader, an Economic Component Evaluator, and an Environmental Component Evaluator. Difficulties were experienced, however, in identifying a Hanoi-based Economic Component Evaluator, and it was thereafter decided to undertake the evaluation with only a two-person team. Two Evaluation Team members were independently contracted by IDRC, as follows:

- Gary Miller: Evaluation Team Leader, and Economic Component Evaluator; and
- Nguyen Cong Thanh: Environmental Component Evaluator.

4 ACHIEVEMENT OF PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

4.1 Overview

VEEM was originally planned as a \$3,000,000 research program focusing on four themes: trade policy reform, poverty alleviation, natural resource management, and biodiversity conservation. It was subsequently decided, however, to reduce the VEEM budget to \$2,000,000, forcing a narrowing of the program's focus to only two themes – trade policy reform, and natural resource management. This narrowing of focus was approved at the first PSC meeting (October 1997).

4.2 Outputs

4.2.1 Output 1: Design a Series of Complementary Research Projects to Support Policy for Economic Reform and Environmental Management

The major project in each component was approved at the first PSC Meeting. This was made possible by the development of the two project proposals during the period between the submission to MOSTE by IDRC of the Letter of Collaboration (December 1996), and MOSTE's response to that letter (August 1997).

A second research project was approved in 1998. The remaining thirteen projects were approved in 1999.

This project development process took much longer than had been anticipated by IDRC. Although IDRC's own planning documents had identified as early as 1995 that the limited absorption capacities of Vietnamese institutes could slow the management and allocation of external funding, IDRC staff admit to having been surprised by the length of time required to get VEEM research projects off the ground. The lengthiness of this process was due to a number of factors: the low levels of research experience/capacities amongst Vietnamese researchers; a lack of familiarity of Vietnamese researchers with IDRC's style of designing research projects; the newness to Vietnamese researchers of concepts in sociology and multi-disciplinary research methods; and the first-time experience for many of the Vietnamese researchers of working with an international donor. These factors were compounded by insufficient IDRC knowledge about Vietnamese research institutes, and by the length of time required for participating partner institutes – once identified by IDRC – to develop project proposals. Indeed, Vietnamese researchers first had to be taught how to write comprehensive and focused research proposals.

Further delays were encountered in the proposal approval process. Proposals developed by the research teams (with the assistance of IDRC) were selected by MOSTE for submission to PSC. Some of the proposals selected by MOSTE were not, however, at least by IDRC, considered strong enough. This was particularly true later in the program, when only two economic projects had so far been approved, and PSC members were feeling a need to speed up the approval process. The result was the approval by PSC of projects that, although "approved", could not begin implementation prior to further development assistance from IDRC. This resulted in further delays in program implementation.

As a result of all these delays, Economic Component research funds originally scheduled to be allocated by September 1998 were not finally allocated until December 1999. This delay resulted in the requirement to extend the program's termination date from end-2000 to end-2001. (This was not, in fact, the programs' first extension. An extension of the program from end-1999 to end-2000 had already been approved in August 1997, as a result of the lengthy period of time required to move from program conceptualization to project start-up (late-1997).)

The impact on the program of these extensions has been two-fold: 1) a delay in the dates by which final project results and policy recommendations could be presented to policy-makers, and 2) a significant increase in overhead and administration costs, due to the requirement to extend the contract of the IDRC VEEM Coordinator in Hanoi by an additional eighteen months.

It is worth noting that the original research plan was for the smaller VEEM projects to be implemented quickly (often within a period of twelve months), thereafter allowing a second round of projects to be funded. Such a second round never materialized, however, due to the delays identified above and, ultimately, to the (not-unrelated) utilization of all VEEM research funds.

4.2.1.1 Economic

As noted above, TLCP was approved at the first PSC meeting. The TLCP budget accounted for \$350,000 of the \$590,000 available for all Economic Component projects.

In September 1998, four further economic project proposals were presented to PSC for approval. One of these projects, the Database of International Trade Activity in Vietnam Project, was a natural complement to TLCP, and was approved. Of the other three projects, one was considered

by IDRC to be inappropriate, and rejected; the remaining two (“Impact of the Asian Financial and Currency Crisis on the Vietnam Economy”, and “The Role of the Private Sector in Vietnam”) were considered by IDRC to require further development prior to their approval. This further development took one year to complete, with the two projects finally being approved at the fifth PSC meeting (December 1999). Three other projects were also developed during 1998-1999 (“Foreign Direct Investment and the Development of the Manufacturing Industry in Vietnam”, “Productivity Analysis for Some Industries in Vietnam”, and “Female Workers of the Garment and Textile Industry in the Context of Trade Liberalization”), and were also approved at the December 1999 PSC meeting. These five approvals completed the allocation of the Economic Component funding, one year after the original target date.

There is general agreement that the “one major project, many minor projects” approach was appropriate, and that TLCP was itself the “right” major project. TLCP’s focus on trade liberalization and the impact of trade reforms on the Vietnamese economy provided a framework for trade policy analysis and assessment, permitting researchers and officials to become familiar with standard methodologies of trade policy analysis, to focus on a largely-untouched but important area of study (competitiveness), and to work with firms and data collection at the manufacturing level – a useful research activity in and of itself. The project also provided guidance to GOV on assessing the possible impact of policy changes on the trade regime, and on improving the competitiveness of the Vietnamese economy.

There is also common agreement on the appropriateness of the trade database project (TDP), given the relationship of the database to the research being conducted under TLCP. With respect to the other five projects, however, attitudes are less unanimous. Although some VEEM members interviewed considered the development of those five projects to have been appropriate, others are doubtful as to their complementarity. One senior VEEM researcher interviewed felt that the five last projects had been developed haphazardly, with no overall vision of what policy reforms they were trying to support, and insufficient complementarity between them to allow that support to be optimized. This lack of complementarity reportedly led, in turn, to difficulties in networking between the projects.

A second issue concerns the strength of the last five project proposals. IDRC members and international experts have both stated that not all of those proposals were as strong as they should have been, leaving IDRC and the experts unclear as to exactly what research and analysis were being proposed. The five projects were, nonetheless, approved, a situation influenced by the fact that, by December 1999, the allocation of Economic Component research funds was already more than one year behind schedule.

In summary, the Economic Component was successful in developing a series of research projects to support policy for economic reform. The complementarity and strength of some of those projects was not, however, apparent to all VEEM members.

4.2.1.2 Environmental

As noted above, MBRP was approved by the first PSC meeting in October 1997. The project was developed from an outline approved by VISED in 1995, taking into account a Participatory Rural Appraisal training course and exercise undertaken in Phu Tan commune in July 1995, and the forming of three interdisciplinary research teams in October 1995 to conduct research in three separate research sites. The MBRP budget accounted for \$275,000 of the \$392,000 available for all Environmental Component projects.

As in the Economic Component, the process of identifying research teams, and of subsequently developing research proposals, proved a lengthy one. Indeed, following the approval of MBRP, no further Environmental Component proposals were even submitted to PSC for approval before the fourth PSC meeting (March 1999). This lengthy delay was due not only to the proposal development/approval difficulties already identified above (Section 4.2.1), but also to debates within PSC on the very direction that was to be taken by the Environmental Component. There were also significant disagreements on the roles and composition of the Environmental Component Advisory Committee (EnCAC; see Section 5.2.2.2 below).

Ten project proposals were submitted to PSC in March 1999. Two of these were rejected by PSC, and four approved immediately (“Monitoring and Assessing the Effectiveness of the Project for the Buffer Zone in Xuan Thuy Ramsar Site”, “Environmental Management of Coastal Aquaculture in Xuan Dai Bay and Dong Bo Field”, “Participatory Assessment of Integrated Resources Management at Estuary Coastal-land of Ganh Rai Bay”, and “Feasibility Study on Farm-product Diversification and Public Participation for Better Coastal Resource Uses and Management”). Four others were accepted in principle, but with further development required (“Protection of Aquatic Resources at Hoang Mai River Estuary”, “Study on Biodiversity Protection of Tidal Wetlands in Hai Phong”, “Assessing Sources of Environmental Degradation in Dam Nai”, and “Preliminary Assessment of Public Participation in Mangrove Forest Management through Land Allocation and Forest Care Policy at Can Gio District, Ho Chi Minh City”).

This “approval in principle” procedure was adopted by PSC so as not to delay further the approval of further Environmental Component projects, while at the same time providing additional time for the further development of four project proposals still considered inadequately-developed by IDRC. These four proposals were developed further by the project teams, IDRC, and EnCAC, and formally approved at the fifth PSC meeting (November 1999). This completed the allocation of Environmental Component funding, more than one year after the original target date.

There is general agreement that the “one major project, many minor projects” approach was appropriate, and that MBRP was itself the “right” major project. The follow-up to a project already funded under VISED, MBRP permitted the continuation of a long-term, multi-disciplinary research effort to raise skill levels in regional research institutes and amongst provincial government resource managers in the Central Provinces. The project also supported close collaboration amongst those same groups, while providing a high-profile, high-impact model for future work by Vietnamese institutes. Through its Participatory Research methodology, local government authorities participated in the development and implementation of the project, a factor that clearly supported local-level policy reform.

A shared methodology ensured a degree of complementarity amongst the Environmental Component projects. A number of VEEM members are of the opinion, nonetheless, that, even after the lengthy periods of time required to develop the smaller projects, those projects still could have been stronger.

In summary, the Environmental Component was successful in developing a series of complementary research projects to support policy for environmental management. The strength of some of those projects was not, however, apparent to a number of VEEM members, including IDRC.

4.2.1.3 Summary and Conclusions

Measured by the Performance Indicator identified in the Logical Framework Analysis (“A series of focused and complementary policy-oriented research projects are developed and implemented with significant Vietnamese participation”), the expected output of designing a series of complementary research projects to support policy for economic reform and environmental management has been generally achieved by VEEM.

The research teams, assisted by IDRC, succeeded in identifying and developing policy-oriented research projects that were, to a greater or lesser degree, focused and complementary, although often less strong than had been anticipated. The most significant problem encountered in their development was that of timeliness, with both components taking considerably longer to develop projects than had been planned. Given the challenges implicit to developing an international-standard research program in Vietnam – one implemented by researchers utilizing new methodological approaches, with an ongoing focus on capacity-building – the delays encountered were perhaps, to some degree, unavoidable. Some of those challenges might, nonetheless, have been better anticipated by IDRC, and a more appropriate (i.e. longer) timeframe for the implementation of the program established in the planning stages. In the end, nonetheless, the program was successful in developing and implementing policy-oriented research projects, albeit at increased effort and cost.

4.2.2 Output 2: Execute Individual Projects by Coordinating the Research Activities of Numerous Institutions and Using a Multi-Disciplinary Approach

4.2.2.1 *Economic*

TLCP and TDP: TLCP and TDP were hosted by IE, with each project team including members from three other institutes. The Team Leader for both projects during the first three years of the program was Dr. Vu Quoc Huy. The Team Leader during the last year of the program was Dr. Nguyen Thang. Supervision of both projects was provided by Dr. Nam, the Project Leader, with overarching supervision and guidance provided by PSC, the Economic Component Advisory Committee (ECAC), and IDRC.

The execution of TLCP and TDP can be considered to have been effective, given the coordination of the inter-disciplinary activities of numerous research institutes, the completion of the planned research, and the presentation of findings and recommendations to policy-makers. The same cannot be said, however, about the *efficiency* of the two projects’ executions. Difficulties with the teams’ management were identified as early as May 1998; by 1999, project deliverables (e.g. progress reports and workplans) were no longer being produced. This situation continued through 1999 and 2000. A change in team leadership was made in early-2001, after which both projects began moving forward again. It was not until November 2001, however, that their Final Workshop was held, and the Final Reports distributed. (Further detail on the management of the teams is provided below (Section 5.2.3.1).)

Although the two projects provided policy recommendations to policy-makers as early as 1998, the delays in their final completion cannot be considered insignificant, given that those delays resulted in the Final Reports and the database not being made available to the public until two years after their target completion dates, by which time they were of somewhat limited utility,

given their datedness. This point was made, in fact, at the Final Workshop, by a GOV representative (see Section 4.2.5.1 below).

Smaller Economic Component Projects: five different institutes have hosted the five smaller projects. Execution of these projects began in the first half of 2000.

Execution of the smaller projects has benefited significantly from project funding provided by the Ford Foundation (FF). Approved in late 1999, the FF project – “Capacity-Building for Vietnamese Researchers in Conducting Enterprise Survey” – was developed by MOSTE and the VEEM research teams themselves, and implemented under the VEEM umbrella. The objectives of the FF project were to build a reliable database at the enterprise level, train Vietnamese researchers to conduct and analyze the results of enterprise surveys, and strengthen research networking as a first step towards integrating Vietnamese researchers into the international community.

Essentially, the five smaller economic projects and the FF project have become one program, coordinating activity around a joint enterprise survey exercise, with FF providing extra funding for VEEM research and training already planned. An FF project Coordination Board, formally chaired by Dr. Nguyen of MOSTE, but in practice led by Dr. Thang (overall coordinator of the five VEEM projects), has overseen the coordination of all VEEM-FF activities. The five research teams have worked together on a multi-sector survey, with each team addressing its own project objectives through the analysis of survey data gathered from 150 firms in the garments and textiles sectors. Training on the conducting of enterprise surveys was provided by the international experts, and followed up by ongoing technical assistance, either through e-mail or through visits to Vietnam. Under Dr. Thang’s overall coordination, and assisted by members of the TLCP and TDP teams, the five projects progressed steadily during 2000-2001, with Final Reports due to be released in February 2002, and a Final Workshop held in March 2002.

Although not plagued by the same difficulties encountered by TLCP and TDP, the five smaller projects have also, however, suffered from delays. These delays have resulted partly from the requirement to adjust the pace and timelines of all projects to ensure their coordination in the conducting of the survey, and in the subsequent processing and analysis of data. Delays have also been encountered in the length of time required undertake surveys and data collection in Vietnam, with data, once collected, often being inconsistent, and requiring even further time for the resolution of its inconsistencies.

Others delays, however, have been caused by factors related to team management and to the individual researchers themselves. These factors have included:

- a lack of work carried out by the researchers between workshops. Work that *was* completed was often submitted to the experts too late for proper evaluation (e.g. the evening before the workshop);
- the senior researchers’ assuming responsibility for all sophisticated quantitative analysis. Given the time constraints of many researchers (often due to their commitment to other projects), this led to delays in the undertaking of that analysis;
- the teams undertaking complex analyses not identified in the VEEM project proposals;
- a lack of experience with empirical research and/or policy analysis of researchers and program managers alike; and
- a shortage of English-speaking researchers and managers.

Many of these delays might have been avoided had more effective team leadership and management been exercised – a perspective provided not only by IDRC members and international experts, but also by team members themselves. Other of the delays, however, seem to have been less avoidable, linked as they were either to shortcomings in the human resource base utilized by the program, or to local professional cultures that traditionally have not rewarded independent thinking and problem-solving.

In summary, the individual Economic Component projects have been successfully executed through the coordination of research activities of numerous institutes, albeit with a degree of efficiency and timeliness that was often lacking. Coordination of the five smaller economic projects has benefited from the implementation of the FF project, and the undertaking of joint VEEM-FF activities under the VEEM umbrella.

4.2.2.2 Environmental

Difficulties were encountered in the coordination of program activities during 1998-1999 as a result of disagreements between MOSTE, IDRC, and PSC on the responsibilities of the various agencies and management bodies. These disagreements – largely the result of a lack of effective communications – resulted not only in a delay in the development of Environmental Component projects, but also in a certain degree of disharmony within EnCAC and the component as a whole. Greater attention paid to effective internal communications might have avoided some of these difficulties.

MBRP: MBRP was hosted and implemented by the Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry, in collaboration with four other organizations. Key amongst these were the Hue University of Science and the Provincial Department of Fisheries. Other partner organizations included the Provincial Department of Science, Technology and Environment, the Nha Trang Oceanography Institute, and the Southeast Asian Research Institute. An expert from Dalhousie University (Halifax) provided the project with technical support.

Execution of MBRP began shortly after its approval, with organizational and management structures established, research agendas and workplans completed, and workshops begun. The objectives of these first workshops were to provide training to potential research institute partners in community-based natural resources management techniques, and to generate project proposals.

The 12-member MBRP research team, comprised of individuals from the two Hue universities and the Department of Fisheries, began fieldwork in April 1998. The project consisted of nine integrated multi-disciplinary studies, focusing on the single problem of over-exploitation of the Tam Giang Lagoon system.

The project was carried out with significant involvement from local authorities and mass organizations, with community participation gaining momentum as the project progressed, due largely to the influence of project facilitators. In dealing with the local authorities, it was found that their management and arbitration roles at the different levels (i.e. provincial, district, communal) needed to be well-defined in order to maximize achieved results.

The main highlight of MBRP's research was the use of participatory and inter-disciplinary methods. Involving local people in problem-solving proved to be an effective method of equipping them with knowledge that they used to become more active in community activities.

Smaller Environmental Component Projects: as with MBRP, the eight smaller projects were executed through coordinating the activities of various research institutes. The overall component strategy was to have the smaller projects “led” by the MBRP project team. Inter-disciplinary activities did not, however, prove highly effective, due to the limited sharing amongst team members of information, experiences, and results. Time devoted to informal learning and dialogue was also limited.

In summary, the individual Environmental Component projects were executed through the coordination of the activities of numerous research institutes, with participatory methods proving particularly useful. Some difficulties were encountered, nonetheless, in overall component-level coordination, as well as in the achieving of inter-disciplinary successes.

4.2.2.3 Summary and Conclusions

Measured by the Performance Indicator identified in the Logical Framework Analysis (“Individual research projects are successfully managed and executed using a cooperative cross-institutional and multi-disciplinary approach”), the expected output of executing individual projects by coordinating the research activities of numerous institutes and using a multi-disciplinary approach has generally been achieved by VEEM.

A number of problems have, nonetheless, been encountered, including less-than-optimal program/project management, and a sometimes ineffective inter-disciplinary approach. More effective inter-agency communications would have contributed to minimizing these problems. It seems unlikely, however, that all such problems could have been avoided, given VEEM’s multi-agency management structure, its focus on capacity-building, and its development of projects on an ongoing basis, rather than based upon an already-established plan. The total avoidance of such problems might, indeed, be considered to some degree undesirable, as capacity-building often occurs as a result of having to face difficulties encountered. The execution/coordination problems encountered in VEEM might thus not all be considered negatively, although, as indicated above, and as will be discussed further below, those problems did have a negative impact on the program in other respects.

4.2.3 Output 3: Engage International Experts to Train Vietnamese Researchers and Improve the Quality of Research Design and Research Results

4.2.3.1 Economic

A number of international experts were engaged to provide ongoing technical support to the project teams. Principal amongst the experts were Bernard Decaluwé and John Cockburn (Université Laval, Canada). Other experts engaged included Remco Oostendorp (Free University, The Netherlands), Patricia Alexander (University of Manchester, The United Kingdom), and Lynn Salinger (Associates for International Research and Development).

The principal training activity carried out has been the holding of training workshops. Organized and managed by the international experts, the workshops have aimed to provide training in international research methodologies, to build individual research capacities, and to develop commonly-shared research languages. Training focused principally on enterprise survey design, and data collection, organization, cleaning, and description, with a lesser focus on proposal preparation, data analysis, and report-writing.

A second component of the training was a fourteen-day study tour of the Canadian research establishment. This tour was undertaken by four senior members of MOSTE and IE (Dr. Nguyen, Mr. Can, Mr. Binh (Department of International Relations, MOSTE), and Dr. Nam). The objective of the tour was to study the organization and financing of research in Canada, and to extract therefrom lessons for the reform of organized research in Vietnam.

The technical assistance and training provided by the international experts is universally regarded as having been key to the successes achieved in the Economic Component. The training workshops, the hands-on technical assistance, the long-distance technical assistance (via e-mail), and the experts' insistence on excellence have all contributed significantly to the development of researcher capacities in research design, implementation, coordination, and reporting. Indeed, the experts have noted that, whereas the first firm survey (1998) took six to seven months to complete, only six to seven *weeks* were required by the second survey (2000) to carry out about the same amount of work. The experts have also remarked upon the newly-developed intellectual ease of researchers – particularly those from TLCP – with important research issues. VEEM researchers themselves, when interviewed, were universally effusive about what they had learned from the experts, with one senior VEEM member describing the training provided as “the essence of the program.”

Challenges in the training program have, nonetheless, been encountered. Some researchers are, for example, still resistant even to use survey data, for reasons such as a perceived lack of ownership (the data was gathered by someone else), a lack of understanding of the concept of random sampling analysis, or the incapacity simply to do the analysis. It is clear, nonetheless, that impressive progress has been made, even if further progress is, in many cases, still required.

Prior to leaving the issue of training, a comment is merited on the structure of the training workshops. The first training workshop (March 1997) included not only researchers, but also many GOV representatives, the presence of whom diminished the value of the workshop to the researchers by necessitating workshop discussions of a less technical nature. Subsequent training workshops did not, however, include GOV representatives, and took on a more technical focus, a development favourably remarked upon by participating researchers.

With respect to the study tour of Canada, the Mission Report submitted afterwards indicates that the four participants considered the objectives of the study tour to have been achieved. The degree of application of lessons learned during the study tour, and the longer-term benefits of the four participants' exposure to the Canadian research establishment, are difficult to quantify, although one very clear result of the study tour was the establishment of a GOV fund for supporting basic research activities in the social sciences, the proposal for which was developed by Dr. Nam following his return from the study tour. IDRC members have also reported that, in informal discussions with participants in the study tour, a broadening of their perspectives as a result of that participation is apparent.

With respect to the quality of the research design and results, divergent opinions have been expressed. Those who spoke at the TLCP/TDP Final Workshop generally agreed that the research undertaken, based upon internationally-recognized techniques, and including researchers from many different research institutes and ministries, was a significant improvement over traditional research methods. The two principal reports presented at the workshop (the Trade Policy Report, and the Competitiveness Report) received considerable accolades from workshop participants. At the same time, however, workshop participants offered significant critiques of the two reports, including questions as to the very relevance of the research findings, given

concerns about the quality and validity of the data (including its datedness (1997-1998)). Specific critiques mentioned focused on a lack of analysis and/or policy recommendations on a broad range of issues, including the international factors influencing the Vietnamese economy, Vietnam's labour cost advantages, inefficiencies of production in Vietnam, the lack of skilled labour and management in Vietnam, and the role of the Vietnamese private sector.

Similar critiques were expressed by other economists interviewed later, including comments that the TLCP/TDP research either repeated research already done by others, "didn't make sense", "included obvious errors", or "could have been done better" given the capabilities and educational backgrounds of the VEEM researchers. A similar perspective was also expressed, it is worth mentioning, by a very senior VEEM researcher.

One factor that contributes to such a situation can be readily identified. The abundance of donors in Vietnam interested in working with Vietnamese researchers leads to situations where those researchers find themselves too overloaded with work to provide effective management and/or high-quality results. VEEM itself was witness to such a situation, with one team leader so occupied with his other work that he was unable to undertake his VEEM responsibilities. A second factor may have been a lack of research review mechanisms in place prior to the dissemination of the projects' final results.

The five smaller economic projects are still to be completed, so no critical reviews can yet be provided. Challenges have been encountered in the design and implementation of the survey, but, given the limited experience of conducting surveys in Vietnam, those challenges, and the delays implicit to them, might be regarded as an unavoidable aspect of the capacity-building taking place. Those delays will, nonetheless, in conjunction with the other delays already discussed, impact negatively upon the projects, as the March 2002 target date for their completion will result in their Final Reports being little more than descriptive. Having said that, however, it must be stated that more detailed analysis of the survey results is planned under future IDRC-funded activities.

In summary, the technical assistance and training provided to VEEM researchers by the international experts has been effective at building individual research capacities, while at the same time leading to an improvement in the quality of research design and results, even though the degree of such improvement is open to debate.

4.2.3.2 Environmental

Dr. Newkirk, of Dalhousie University, provided training and technical support to the Environmental Component projects. His work, originally intended to be largely responsive, was, in the end, significantly more planned. Dr. Newkirk's efforts focused primarily on MBRP.

Workshops were held as follows:

January 1999	Training workshop
October 1999	Interim workshop
May 2000	Training workshop on Participatory Research methods
November 2000	Interim Results workshop (Haiphong)

The teams received periodic group training in community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) research methods, and in report-writing skills. Results of the training included

improved capacities in analysis and report-writing, increased comfort levels with group discussions, improved liaison capacities with government officials, and a new awareness of the value to research efforts of e-mail/Internet. Dr. Newkirk's participation was key to the success of the training activities, and is considered by many to have been a critical factor in the successes achieved by the Environmental Component.

Final Reports for MBRP were produced for the May 2001 Final Workshop. Final Reports for the eight smaller environment projects were presented at their November 2001 Final Workshop. IDRC has indicated its general satisfaction with these reports, although it considers some of them to have not contained as much analysis as it would have liked to see.

In summary, the technical assistance and training provided to VEEM researchers was effective at building individual research capacities, while at the same time leading to the completion of solid reports.

4.2.3.3 Summary and Conclusions

Measured by the Performance Indicator identified in the Logical Framework Analysis ("Research design, execution and outputs show significant improvement over traditional Vietnamese methods and results, using internationally recognized techniques"), the expected output of international experts training Vietnamese researchers and improving the quality of research design and research results has been generally achieved by VEEM.

The training provided by the international experts has been key to the successes achieved by the program. The importance of this training to the program is reflected in the fact that, in the minds of most VEEM members interviewed, capacity-building of Vietnamese researchers was *the* principal VEEM objective, as well as its principal achievement. This capacity-building has not occurred flawlessly, of course, nor to the extent that further capacity-building is not required, but its importance to the successes achieved by the program cannot be doubted.

In terms of the quality of VEEM research design and results, there are divergent perspectives on what has been achieved. The quantity and complexity of the research carried out are generally recognized as being a significant improvement over traditional Vietnamese results and methods. Enthusiasm for the results is muted, however, with there being a commonly-held perspective that higher-quality work could have been produced.

In closing, it is worth noting that IDRC has perceived one of its roles in VEEM to be the provision of assistance to the research teams, rather than necessarily the provision of direction. This perspective has led IDRC to not intervene on all occasions when methodological shortcomings have been identified. Such an approach has allowed the VEEM researchers to learn from their mistakes, yet at the same time has increased the length of time required to complete the research, and impacted negatively on the value of the results themselves. This trade-off between capacity-building and value of results is in many ways inevitable in research programs with a capacity-building component, and must be taken into account in the development and planning of such programs.

4.2.4 Output 4: Undertake Peer Consultation and Review in Research and Policy Debate, Both in Vietnam and in the Region

Peer consultation and review occurred through networking, policy workshops, and dissemination activities. Networks of researchers were an established component of all of the VEEM projects, with peer consultation and review taking place within those project networks, amongst the VEEM project networks, and between the projects and other non-VEEM projects and networks. Policy workshops brought VEEM members together with representatives of government, other research institutes, and international organizations to discuss policy issues, develop partnerships, and encourage the adoption of policies based upon VEEM results. Dissemination activities focused on the distribution of VEEM research results.

PSC held extensive discussions on VEEM's Dissemination Strategy, beginning at the third PSC meeting (September 1998), and continuing with every PSC meeting thereafter. Follow-up to these discussions seemed inevitably, however, to be the tasking of a PSC member to develop a (more) detailed strategy proposal prior to the next PSC meeting, rather than the actual approval of a strategy. Increasingly urgent calls for dissemination activities to commence were made at the fifth (December 1999) and sixth (November 2000) PSC meetings, but did not result in such activities actually taking place. Discussions at the seventh PSC meeting (October 2001) still referred principally to *future* dissemination activities, to focus on the distribution of CDs, the publishing of books and articles, and the releasing of VEEM information to the mass media. It was thus not until the final months of the program that any of the dissemination activities discussed by PSC since 1998 actually began to occur.

Dissemination of VEEM results had, nonetheless, already occurred through the distribution on a more *ad hoc* basis of interim findings, reports, data, and documentation. Details of these activities are provided below.

4.2.4.1 Economic

Networks: networking has occurred not only within and between VEEM projects, but also outside of the program, where VEEM team members, being well-placed in other projects, have pursued peer consultation and review within the broader research community. Some challenges in this networking have been encountered, but the networks themselves are universally considered by persons interviewed to have been an effective and highly valuable means of undertaking peer consultation and review.

Key organizations involved in VEEM networks have included IE, the Central Institute for Economic Management, the Institute of World Economy, the Institute for Economic and Development Studies, the Research Center of Female Labour, the Institute of Market and Price Research, the General Statistics Office, the Prime Minister's Research Commission (PMRC), and the research groups of the Ministries of Trade, Planning and Investment, and Labour, War Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA). Other organizations involved have included the Vietnam Institute of Trade, the Institute of Economics in Ho Chi Minh City, the Macroeconomics and Labour Faculties of the National Economics University, the College for Labour and Social Issues, and the Institute of Labour Science and Social Affairs.

Peer consultation and review has also occurred, albeit to a lesser degree, through participation in regional networks. VEEM members have participated in the Development Analysis Network, and networked with IDRC's Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies (MIMAP) project. VEEM members have also networked with economists working both in Vietnam and in the region, such as the Women's Union research groups working on gender and garments industry issues in Vietnam and Cambodia.

VEEM teams have met regularly with GOV and international agencies, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and United Nations agencies. VEEM members have also participated in regional/international meetings and conferences (Kathmandu, Manila, Quebec City), presenting and discussing VEEM work.

Of the various methods utilized for peer consultation and review, networking and policy meetings are considered by VEEM members to have been the most useful, effective, and immediate. Every VEEM member interviewed spoke with extraordinary enthusiasm not only about the great value to their work of the research networks that they participated in, but also about the impossibility of reverting to a situation where networking played a much less significant role.

Policy Workshops: an Interim TLCP/TDP Workshop was held in 1999, and the Final Workshop in November 2001. Participants in both workshops included researchers, GOV representatives, and representatives of international agencies. Interim Reports were presented at the first workshop, and Final Reports at the second. These presentations and subsequent discussions generated discussion about the program's work, albeit in a limited manner, given the short durations of the workshops and the limited attendance of key policy-makers. It is the opinion of a number of VEEM members that policy workshops such as those organized in 1999 and 2001 are of limited utility to peer consultation and review, particularly if participation in those workshops is not restricted to researchers, and if the workshops' timeframe and agenda do not permit extended technically-oriented discussions to occur.

A Final Workshop for the five smaller economic projects is scheduled to be held in March 2002. Researchers, policy-makers, and other interested parties are expected to attend.

Dissemination Activities: as indicated above, none of the dissemination activities discussed by PSC were undertaken prior to the completion of TLCP and TDP. With their recent completion, the results of these two projects will now be published, in English and Vietnamese, in Canada and in Vietnam. Findings of TLCP, TDP, and the smaller economic projects will also be put on CD and distributed to more than one hundred government departments, research institutes, and universities in Vietnam. Despite ongoing discussions at PSC on the value of establishing a VEEM website, no such website was ever established, as the same objective was eventually considered to be able to be met through the distribution of CDs. Plans to publish books encompassing the VEEM research papers, abstracts, and results have also apparently been shelved.

In addition to the end-of-project dissemination activities, TLCP and TDP interim results have found their way into the public domain on a more *ad hoc* basis, including through the following:

- "Viet Nam Social and Economic Studies", Autumn 1999. Presentation of the main TLCP results.
- ADB Institute Working Paper No. 5, December 1999, "Institutional Aspects of Privatization: the Case of Vietnam". Presentation of some results and ideas from the Trade Policy paper.
- "Development Seminar Series" organized by the Vietnam-Netherlands M.A. Program in Economics of Development and the Vietnam Development Information Center, in 2000. Presentation of the main TLCP findings.
- Oxfam Paper (June 2000), "Vietnam: New Challenges for Growth, Equity, and Poverty Reduction." Presentation of some results and ideas from the Trade Policy paper.

- “Trends and Issues in East Asia 2001 – Knowledge-Based Economic Growth and Socio-Political Implications in East Asia” Forum, held in Tokyo in October 2000. Utilization of a main TLCP finding in a paper presented.
- Australian/Vietnamese Public Policy Workshop, organized jointly by Ho Chi Minh Academy and the National Center for Development Studies, Australia National University in May 2001. Utilization of main TLCP results in papers presented.
- Institute of Economics journals. Presentation of numerous TLCP reports.

In summary, peer consultation and review has been successfully undertaken throughout the program in various fora. Of these, research networks – both internal and external to VEEM – have proven most immediate and effective, with ongoing dissemination activities also serving to present program results to a wider research and policy-making audience. Policy workshops are widely considered to have been less successful in achieving peer consultation and review, due principally to their structural constraints, but did succeed in presenting research results to potentially-influential members of the research and policy-making communities.

4.2.4.2 Environmental

Networks: virtually all of Vietnam's coastal zone management groups were included in every aspect of the Environmental Component's work. This was the first time that a project had reached out so broadly to Vietnam's coastline peoples. The management groups profited considerably from these peer exchanges. IDRC made a special effort to link the regional CBNRM network to the VEEM groups. Researchers also organized regular scientific exchanges, workshops, and field studies.

The VEEM project teams undertook peer consultation and review amongst themselves at the Environmental Component's training and policy workshops. The comparison of experiences and results was facilitated by the use of common methodologies. The teams also organized regular scientific exchanges and field studies, and developed a good relationship with local governments, thereby enhancing the credibility of the projects' advice on the effective management of biological resources.

There is a widespread perception that environmental research networks in Vietnam have been strengthened as a result of VEEM. Networks certainly existed prior to the start of VEEM, but the multi-institutional multi-disciplinary approach established by VEEM has served to reinforce and strengthen those networks.

Outside of Vietnam, there have also been accomplishments in network strengthening, with VEEM researchers participating in regional and international activities. One networking link was with IDRC's CBNRM Project. Strengthening of networks with Canadian and other international research institutes also occurred, primarily with Canadian CBNRM partners such as Dalhousie University.

Policy Workshops: an Interim Workshop for all Environment Component projects was hosted by the Haiphong Institute of Oceanography in November 2000. VEEM teams presented and shared their interim reports, and discussed innovative ways to learn through direct interaction. As part of the workshop, the teams visited the Institute's field site, and subsequently discussed alternative approaches for their own projects based on that experience. All teams made changes to their research plans, leaving the workshop with new ideas for implementing the final stages of their research.

The Final Workshop for MBRP was held in May 2001. The Final Workshop for the other eight Environmental Component projects was held in October 2001. A Final Workshop for the Environmental Component as a whole was held in November 2001.

Dissemination Activities: end-of-program dissemination activities included the Final Reports produced for the Final Workshops in 2001. Project documents, research findings, and conclusions were put on CD and will be presented to PMRC, ministries, and research institutes. Further dissemination activities will include the publishing of articles on the projects' work, both in English and in Vietnamese. As indicated above, no program website was established; Environmental Component members felt that, given a general lack of access to Internet in Vietnam, the production of a CD would be a more effective method of disseminating project results.

In summary, peer consultation and review were undertaken throughout the program in various fora, with the research networks – both internal and external to VEEM – proving the most effective.

4.2.4.3 Summary and Conclusions

Measured by the Performance Indicator identified in the Logical Framework Analysis (“Specific activities are undertaken during the course of research to interact with the wider Vietnamese and regional research and policy-making communities”), the expected output of undertaking peer consultation and review in research and policy debate, both in Vietnam and in the region, has been achieved by VEEM.

The program has successfully initiated internal and public debate on economic and environmental management issues, and provided data and results on those issues to the public. In the process of doing so, it has effectively engaged national and international research and policy-making communities, both in Vietnam and in the region.

Research networks, principally those established/strengthened by VEEM, have proven the most effective method of undertaking peer consultation and review, with Vietnamese and international networks external to the program also proving valuable. Dissemination activities have proven less valuable, but still a useful complement to the other activities undertaken. Policy workshops have proven least valuable, given their irregularity, their limited scope for technical discussion, and the small number of key individuals willing or able to attend.

4.2.5 Output 5: Make Policy Recommendations and Present Them to Policy-Makers

Policy recommendations have been presented to policy-makers throughout the life of VEEM. This has occurred at various level of government, through the personal interventions of members of PSC, the CACs, and the project teams, through meetings and policy workshops with government officials, international organizations, and financial institutions, and through the undertaking of end-of-program and more *ad hoc* dissemination activities.

4.2.5.1 Economic

Personal Interventions: personal interventions with policy-makers have been made on an ongoing basis from the very beginning of the program, principally by members of PSC and ECAC.

Policy-makers regularly consulted have included the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministries of Trade, Finance, and Planning and Investment. Interventions have also been made, albeit less regularly, with senior Communist Party leaders, including the General-Secretary of the Party and the President of Vietnam.

Dr. Nam has been particularly active in presenting VEEM-generated policy recommendations to policy-makers, organizing meetings with government ministries, becoming directly involved in the Prime Minister's policy-making, and preparing GOV economic policy documents. The findings of VEEM have thus, through Dr. Nam, had a direct conduit to some of the most influential policy-makers in Vietnam.

Dr. Doanh (Advisor to the Minister of Planning and Investment) and Dr. Luoc (a member of PMRC) have also played important roles in presenting VEEM research findings and policy recommendations to senior policy-makers. Dr. Doanh was particularly influential early in the program, when he was the most active and influential member of ECAC.

Policy recommendations have also had a conduit to policy-makers through the members of PSC. Indeed, so many persons influential in the realm of policy-making in Vietnam have been participants in VEEM that, in retrospect, the presentation of VEEM policy recommendations to policy-makers appears almost to have been a given. This was not, of course, coincidental – the membership of PSC, the CACs, and the project teams was selected specifically for that reason.

Meetings have also been held regularly between VEEM teams and senior policy-makers, including the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministries of Trade, Finance, and Planning and Investment. Many of these meetings have been requested expressly by the policy-makers themselves, and have proven effective fora for the presentation of policy recommendations based upon VEEM research.

Policy Workshops: the 1999 Interim TLCP/TDP Workshop and the 2001 Final Workshop presented research results and policy recommendations directly to GOV representatives in attendance at those workshops. Following the 1999 workshop, PMRC requested that the TLCP and TDP teams provide it with a more comprehensive briefing on the findings and conclusions presented at the workshop. Nothing is known about any similar requests following the 2001 workshop, although GOV representatives attending the workshop did express interest in the findings. (It is not unlikely, of course, that there is less interest in 2001/2002 than in 1999, given that so many of the findings and recommendations of TLCP and TDP had, by 2001, already found their way to GOV and the public domain.)

As with the seeking of peer consultation and review, the value of policy workshops as a means of presenting policy recommendations to policy-makers is questionable – an opinion held by a number of VEEM members. Although some policy-makers did attend the workshops, many others, including key decision-makers, did not. Furthermore, the structure of those workshops, in which attendees came not only from government but also from research institutes and international organizations, was not conducive to a focused debate on policy issues. The workshops did, nonetheless, serve to present ideas to policy-makers, and appear to have resulted in 1999 in a follow-on request for further briefings (although how much that request resulted from the Interim Workshop itself, and how much from other activities (e.g. personal interventions and meetings) is open to debate).

Dissemination Activities: as noted in Section 4.2.4, none of the dissemination activities discussed by PSC occurred prior to the completion of individual projects in 2001. With the completion of TLCP/TDP, their results will now be published, in English and Vietnamese, in Canada and in Vietnam. Findings of TLCP, TDP, and the smaller economic projects will also be put on CD and distributed to more than one hundred government departments, research institutes, and universities in Vietnam.

In terms of *ad hoc* dissemination of information, the findings of TLCP and TDP have been made available to policy-makers throughout the life of the program, a process encouraged by ECAC members and the international experts. The dissemination of information to policy-makers has resulted in, amongst others, the following:

- the inclusion of TLCP/TDP findings in IE's annual Economic Report submitted to PMRC. These reports are used by the Prime Minister in his annual report to the National Assembly.
- the inclusion of TLCP/TDP findings in the recently-released (2001) National Human Development Report supported by UNDP. The English version of this report will be distributed worldwide.
- the inclusion of TLCP/TDP results in MPI's Report on Vietnam's Economic International Integration, in 2000.
- the utilization of TLCP results in the designing of strategies for Vietnam's integration into AFTA and OPEC.
- the utilization of TLCP results in the development of GOV's ten-year development strategy.
- the utilization of TLCP results in strategies for the reform of state-owned enterprises in Vietnam.

In summary, the presentation of policy recommendations to policy-makers has occurred throughout the life of the program in various fora. Of these, personal interventions and meetings with policy-makers have proven the most immediate and effective, given the influence within GOV and the Communist Party of so many key members of VEEM. *Ad hoc* dissemination activities and policy workshops have also contributed to the presentation of program results to a wider research and policy-making audience, although the workshops were, for the reasons already mentioned above, perhaps the least successful forum in this respect.

4.2.5.2 Environmental

Personal Interventions: personal interventions were an implicit aspect of all environmental projects, given the Participatory Research methodology utilized. Interventions focused on provincial, district, and communal governments, all of which were involved in project planning and implementation. Researchers developed a good relationship with local government officials, thereby enhancing the credibility of the project's advice on the effective management of biological resources, and allowing them to provide knowledge on resource management to local government. Although there was originally some confusion amongst some of the policy-makers about what the projects were trying to achieve, in the end the projects' objectives and methodologies became clear to most of them. MBRP went the furthest in this respect, although its efforts to engage provincial Department of Fisheries staff, and to broaden the project's implementation, foundered to a degree on the unexplained opposition of the Department's Director.

Some VEEM members believe that VEEM personnel should have intervened more strongly at the district and provincial levels, establishing stronger policy linkages with actors such as MOLISA. Given, however, the difficulty of influencing higher-level environmental policy – a result of different environmental issues fall under the authority of different line ministries – the influencing of authorities at the local level was made the highest priority, as it was there that it was felt the greatest impact would be made.

At the national level, Dr. Duc and Dr. Hoi strongly supported the projects, engaging in dialogue with GOV officials and international organizations.

Policy Workshops: the most important workshops for influencing policy-makers were the Final MBRP Workshop in May 2001, and the Final Environmental Component Workshop in November 2001. Government authorities from different levels participated actively in both workshops. Workshop activities included small working groups to develop environmental policy recommendations for district, provincial, and national authorities.

VEEM personnel also participated in non-VEEM workshops (e.g. workshops organized by Sustainable Aquaculture for Poverty Alleviation, DFID, and DANIDA), as well as in international conferences (Japan, China).

Dissemination Activities: end-of-program dissemination activities have included the presentation of Final Reports to local and national government officials. Project documents, research findings, and conclusions have also been put on a CD, for presentation to PMRC, ministries, and research institutes. Further dissemination activities will include the publishing of articles on the projects' work, both in English and in Vietnamese.

In summary, the presenting of policy recommendations to policy-makers was made throughout the program in various fora. As with the Economic Component, personal interventions and meetings with policy-makers proved the most immediate and effective means of presenting policy recommendations, with policy workshops and dissemination activities playing a supporting role.

4.2.5.3 *Summary and Conclusions*

Measured by the Performance Indicator identified in the Logical Framework Analysis ("Policy recommendations are credible and based on defensible research results"), the expected output of policy recommendations being presented to policy-makers has been generally achieved by VEEM.

There are, of course, differing perspectives on the quality, and therefore the credibility, of some of the VEEM recommendations. The fact that those recommendations have been accepted by Vietnamese policy-makers, however, is indication enough of the degree to which they are considered by those policy-makers to be credible and defensible.

Personal interventions and meetings have proven the most effective method of presenting policy recommendations to policy-makers, supported by dissemination activities carried out throughout the life of the projects. Policy workshops have been least valuable, given their irregularity, their limited scope for policy discussion, and the small number of key individuals willing or able to attend. As has already been discussed above, the utility of such workshops as a means of influencing policy-makers should be reexamined.

In closing, two final points merit mention. Firstly, one IDRC staff member has stated that IDRC's principal target group for influencing policy-makers in GOV was not, in fact, the key policy-makers themselves, but the Vietnamese research community, in conjunction with lower levels of the government's policy hierarchy. Members of those two groups would, it was hoped, assume "ownership" of the research issues and pursue them thereafter with key policy-makers. Although this perspective is not reflected in VEEM planning documents, or in the manner in which influential persons were identified for VEEM organizational structures (PSC, the CACs), it does reflect an IDRC concentration on capacity-building to the potential detriment of other program objectives.

Secondly, a number of IDRC/CIDA personnel have stated that it was unwise of IDRC and CIDA to ever believe that Vietnamese government policy-makers could be influenced by VEEM research. This perspective, in conjunction with that just mentioned, points again to the seeming recognition at both IDRC and CIDA of the primacy of the program's capacity-building objective – a primacy that, in conjunction with program/project management shortcomings, had a clear impact upon the ability of VEEM to achieve its policy recommendations objective.

4.3 Outcomes

4.3.1 Outcome 1: Introduce Strategic Coordination of Policy Research and Development

4.3.1.1 Economic

As already described above, there has been a strategic coordination between VEEM and GOV, with researchers and policy-makers working together in the identification and undertaking of key research activities. This coordination has, nonetheless, been limited, restricted to those relatively few researchers, research institutes, and GOV personnel working with VEEM. Although limited, however, the relationship between VEEM and GOV has been a positive one, with a particularly strong symbiosis developing between IE and GOV. An especially valuable relationship has been established with PMRC, which has on numerous occasions requested that IE undertake analyses based upon the findings of TLCP/TDP research. Through that research, IE/VEEM has come to be recognized, not only by GOV, but also by other researchers, state-owned enterprise management, and even the private sector, as a focal point for the discussion of trade liberalization and competitiveness issues. Progress, albeit limited, has thus already been achieved with respect to this outcome.

4.3.1.2 Environmental

One VEEM member interviewed considers that, as a result of VEEM, policy-makers see an ongoing relationship with researchers. Comments made by MOSTE and the Department of Fisheries in Hue seem to confirm this perspective.

4.3.1.3 Summary and Conclusions

Measured by the Performance Indicator identified in the Logical Framework Analysis ("Researchers and policy-makers from various government departments and research institutes work together on research to support policy development"), the expected outcome of introducing strategic coordination of policy research and development has, at least to some extent, been achieved by VEEM.

Strategic coordination has, to date, been limited by the restricted number of researchers, research institutes, and government personnel involved with VEEM. Strong relationships have, nonetheless, been developed, relationships that should continue to exert a positive influence across an increasingly-broad spectrum of research institute-government relations. Given, however, the uncertainties implicit to the socio-political context of Vietnam, such progress must not be considered a given, and will demand the ongoing attention of researchers, research institutes, and international organizations alike.

4.3.2 Outcome 2: Strengthen Ability of Researchers, Institutes, and Policy-Makers To Do Research To Support Policy Development

4.3.2.1 *Economic*

The strengthening by VEEM of the abilities of economic researchers, as well as the working relationship between researchers and policy-makers, has already been described above, and will not be repeated here.

In terms of the strengthening of the abilities of institutes, this has not been *per se* a focus of VEEM, although the strengthening of the abilities of individual researchers and managers belonging to research institutes, and the strengthening of the relationships between research institutes and GOV, donors, and international organizations, has clearly served to address that objective. Institutional strengthening has also occurred through the strengthening of the research networks, which foster inter-institute coordination and contribute to the breaking-down of the historical compartmentalization of Vietnamese research institutes (under which each institute is regarded as having its own research “turf”). Further institutional strengthening is undoubtedly required, but through its focus on training individual researchers and strengthening research networks, VEEM has taken a large step in moving the program’s research institutions towards their goal of becoming pre-eminent centers of expertise in enterprise survey methodology and economic analysis in Vietnam.

In terms of the strengthening of the abilities of policy-makers, it can be surmised that, through working with the VEEM project teams, the abilities of PMRC and other GOV ministry researchers to do their own research supporting policy development have indirectly been strengthened. GOV researchers are, however, often so occupied with operational taskings that they have little time to participate either in policy-development research or in the research networks, thus leaving GOV little option but to call upon the research institutes for the undertaking of specific research.

4.3.2.2 *Environmental*

The strengthening by VEEM of the abilities of economic researchers has already been discussed above, and will not be repeated here.

4.3.2.3 *Summary and Conclusions*

Measured by the Performance Indicator identified in the Logical Framework Analysis (“Policy-makers request research, have access to research results, and use them to develop policy”), the expected outcome of strengthening the ability of researchers, institutes, and policy-makers to do research to support policy development has, at least to some extent, been achieved by VEEM.

VEEM has made significant contributions to Vietnam's ability to do research supporting economic and environmental policy development, with Vietnamese policy-makers requesting research from VEEM institutes and team members, having access to research results, and using those results to develop policy. As with the previous outcome, however, VEEM's contribution to this outcome has been limited by the restricted number of researchers, research institutes, and government personnel involved with the program. There seems no obvious reason, however, why the fruitful working relationships fostered by VEEM should not continue, although, again, uncertainties implicit to the socio-political context of Vietnam will demand that researchers, research institutes, and international organizations alike pay ongoing attention to this issue.

4.3.3 Outcome 3: Strengthen Research Networks

Inter-institute dialogue and coordination have historically been poor in Vietnam, with research networks functioning ineffectually, if at all. It was thus that, in designing VEEM, the strengthening of Vietnamese research networks was made one of the program's principal objectives.

4.3.3.1 Economic

There was consensus amongst all VEEM members interviewed that Vietnamese economic research networks have been greatly strengthened as a result of VEEM. This opinion was also held by the outside economists interviewed, one of whom considered network-strengthening to be the most important of all VEEM results, and one whose momentum in Vietnam may now be unstoppable.

Some economic research networks did exist in Vietnam prior to the start of VEEM, but the multi-institute multi-disciplinary approach established by VEEM has served to reinforce and strengthen economic networking significantly. Key factors in this success have been the selection of Vietnamese researchers with strong capacities and contacts, the establishment of effective internal coordination mechanisms, and ongoing support provided by the international experts. As was already noted above, some challenges have been encountered in networking, but on the whole it has been both valuable and effective. The enthusiasm of team members for networking is now such that they see no possibility of reverting to traditional non-networking practices; there is, indeed, an almost universal perspective that networking in Vietnam must now continue to grow. Strategies for ensuring such growth should focus on the strengthening of individual researcher capacities, the bringing of younger researchers into the networks (currently dominated by older researchers), the formalizing of inter-institute dialogue and collaboration through regular consultations and coordination meetings, and the sharing of ideas, information, methodologies, results, and reporting.

The participation of Vietnamese researchers in international networks has also been strengthened through VEEM, with VEEM members participating in the Development Analysis Network, and networking with IDRC's MIMAP project. Strengthening of the networks has also occurred through the establishing of relations with Canadian and other international research institutes, primarily through the international experts.

4.3.3.2 Environmental

The strengthening of research networks, and the participation of Vietnamese researchers in those networks, has already been discussed above, and will not be repeated here.

4.3.3.3 Summary and Conclusions

Measured by the Performance Indicator identified in the Logical Framework Analysis (“Vietnamese researchers participate in regional research networks”), the expected outcome of strengthened research networks has been achieved by VEEM.

VEEM has contributed significantly to the increased participation of researchers in Vietnamese, regional, and international research networks. The enthusiasm for networking is now so strong amongst some VEEM researchers that a return to traditional research practices seems highly unlikely. There is thus promise of ongoing strengthening of the research networks, and the expansion of those networks and networking activities into other projects, institutes, and sectors.

4.3.4 Outcome 4: Conduct Research Leading to Policy Recommendations For Economic Reform and Environmental Management

The conducting of research leading to policy recommendations for economic reform and environmental management has been discussed at length in Section 4.2.5 above. Relevant and credible policy recommendations were made to policy-makers as a result of the research carried out through VEEM.

Measured by the Performance Indicator identified in the Logical Framework Analysis (“Research results yield relevant and credible policy recommendations”), the expected outcome of conducting research leading to policy recommendations for economic reform and environmental management has been achieved by VEEM.

4.4 Impact

The expected impact of VEEM was an increase in Vietnam’s ability to design and implement effective economic reform and environmental policy.

Measured by the Performance Indicator identified in the Logical Framework Analysis (“Policies for economic reform and environmental management are based on systematic research using internationally-recognized techniques and supported by research results”), the expected impact has been achieved by VEEM, albeit in a limited manner.

It cannot, of course, be stated with any degree of certainty the extent to which in the last four years systematic research using internationally-recognized techniques and supported by research results has influenced the design and implementation of economic reform and environmental management policies in Vietnam. It is clear, nonetheless, that, given the manner in which certain policies have been introduced by government in Vietnam, such research – including VEEM research – has played an important role. Perspectives on the quality of some VEEM research may vary, but it is apparent from the manner in which policy-makers have utilized that research that it has exerted an influence upon policy design and implementation.

The extent of that influence has, nonetheless, been very limited, given the magnitude of the economic reform and environmental management required in Vietnam, and the limited scope of VEEM itself. VEEM might, in this case, be best regarded as a research program model from which future research programs can learn. This model, with components of individual and institutional capacity-building, strengthening of research networks, and development of close

working relationships between research institutes and government, should continue to be an attractive one for government, research institutes, and international organizations alike.

4.5 Crosscutting Themes

4.5.1 Environmental Sustainability

4.5.1.1 Economic

Identified in the Contribution Agreement as a crosscutting theme, environmental sustainability became, in the VEEM Inception Report, a direct and explicit goal of VEEM, but one to be addressed exclusively by the program's Environmental Component. The relevance of this crosscutting theme to the Economic Component was thus regarded, from the very beginning of the program, as questionable. Not surprisingly, therefore, environmental sustainability never figured in Economic Component discussions.

Given the component's focus on policy research, with no field activities to be undertaken other than economic surveys, this development might not be considered extraordinary. Environmental sustainability might, of course, have been addressed through the undertaking of economic research with an environmental orientation, but given that the focus of VEEM economic research was identified from the very beginning of the program as being trade policy reform, the possibility of such an orientation was remote in the extreme. The crosscutting theme of environmental sustainability identified during VEEM conceptualization was thus not crosscutting at all, but a theme specific to only one of the program's two components.

4.5.1.2 Environmental

Environmental sustainability was a central feature of the community-based coastal zone management work.

In the "Study on Community-Based Aquaculture – Mangrove Integrated Farming for Sustainable Uses and Management of Coastal Environment and Resources in Ca Mau Province" project, some environmental and biological parameters (e.g. water pH, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, COD, salinity, H₂S) were found suitable for shrimp growth. These factors became useful environmental indicators for monitoring and evaluating coastal resources changes, especially in the mangrove-aquaculture farming systems. As was evident in this project, the integrated mangrove-aquaculture farming system has an important socio-economic influence, and is considered a useful tool for community-based natural resource management.

Knowledge of environmental awareness and environmental quality management needed to be reinforced amongst the project teams; biological and ecological data were extensively collected by the researchers, but presented in project reports without critical analysis in these areas. Environmental impact assessments, and the presence of toxic chemicals and toxic wastes, were also not adequately reported.

The work carried out by MBRP played a significant role in influencing government perspectives in Hue on the link between environmental sustainability and rural development.

4.5.1.3 Summary and Conclusions

With the program separated into two components, one with no obvious link to environment sustainability issues, and the other focused 100% on natural resources and the environment, IDRC and VEEM management were confused about how to operationalize environmental sustainability across the two components. This confusion is apparent from the almost complete absence of references to environmental sustainability in VEEM documentation, and resulted in the commonly-held perspective that environmental sustainability was either completely irrelevant (to the Economic Component), or so implicit to the program itself that it required no special attention (by the Environmental Component). The Economic Component, indeed, undertook no activities whatsoever that had an environmental sustainability focus. The Environmental Component did, on the other hand, play an important role in influencing government perspectives on the link between environmental sustainability and rural development.

4.5.2 Gender

4.5.2.1 Overview

One of the lessons learned from VISED was that focused attention on gender issues is required in Vietnam if prevailing cultural biases amongst counterparts are to be overcome. From the very beginning of VEEM, therefore, the gender dimension was identified as requiring special and ongoing attention. This was reflected in the IR, which stated that gender issues were not to be addressed by any specific VEEM project, but rather would be taken into account in the program as a whole (e.g. through a significant participation of women in program research teams), with PSC members and research teams in both components to be provided with literature and materials on gender issues.

The importance of gender issues was, indeed, recognized by PSC from the beginning of the program, with ongoing calls at PSC meetings for the incorporation of gender into all VEEM projects. In 1998, a gender expert (Dr. Patricia Alexander) was contracted to provide VEEM with specific ideas on incorporating gender issues systematically into all projects. At the fourth PSC meeting (March 1999), plans were discussed for a gender workshop for members of both VEEM components; those plans fell through, however, as they met with the objection of PSC members who regarded gender analytical methods in environment and natural resource management as being too different from those in trade and economic policy to make a single gender workshop valuable.

From March 1999 to the end of the program, there were no further PSC discussions on gender issues.

4.5.2.2 Economic

The IR identified a particular lack of familiarity with gender issues on the part of members of TLCP, and the need to improve those members' skills and methods of gender-analysis, for transfer to other researchers.

Amongst senior Economic Component members, there has been widespread recognition of the importance of gender issues, but disagreement on whether those issues should be addressed through the mainstreaming of gender activities or through the creation of a specific gender project (a possibility that the IR had, in fact, specifically discounted). In the end, both strategies were adopted, with gender being mainstreamed into component activities and a specific gender project approved. Mainstreaming of gender issues was pursued through the provision of gender literature

to Economic Component and project team members and, through Dr. Alexander and the other international experts, a focus on gender issues (including training on gender-aggregated research) in training workshops. The objective of the gender project was to improve the understanding of the labour market, and women's participation in that market, in the garments and textiles sector.

Difficulties have been encountered in convincing all researchers, including even some senior researchers, of the importance of gender issues. IDRC and Dr. Alexander have also encountered difficulties in drawing other Vietnamese gender researchers into the project (although the paucity of researchers in economics and gender fields in Vietnam makes this perhaps not surprising). The establishment of a firm gender perspective in the Economic Component has thus had its challenges. Positive results have, nonetheless, been achieved. At an individual level, many VEEM and non-VEEM researchers have learned, through the workshops and technical assistance provided by the experts, of the importance of gender issues, and also methods for undertaking gender analysis. At the team level, a gender-specific project has been developed and implemented, while almost half of all Economic Component researchers have been women. At the institutional level, assistance has been provided to the Research Center for Female Labour (RCFL), the sole research institute in Hanoi with an explicit interest in economic gender issues. Although RCFL is comprised primarily of young researchers with little economics background, and has no cadre of trained professionals between those researchers and the institute's leadership, significant progress has been made by the Center in undertaking gender-specific research, in learning useful software and research methodologies, and in pursuing cooperation on gender research issues with more technically-advanced institutes.

Feelings amongst VEEM members are somewhat negative, nonetheless, on the question of the success of the Economic Component in addressing gender issues. The value of the activities undertaken, and of the successes achieved, is recognized, yet there is still a commonly-held opinion that a broader acceptance by individual researchers of the importance of gender, and increased strengthening of skills in gender-aggregated research, could have developed had gender been pushed with greater diligence by the Gender Specialist, IDRC, and PSC. This did not occur, however, resulting in gender-focused activities continuing throughout the life of the program at a lower level of intensity than was originally foreseen, and even than was widely accepted as appropriate.

In summary, differing views on how gender should be addressed in the Economic Component resulted in the design and implementation of a gender-specific project, and in the mainstreaming of gender issues in component activities. The final results of the gender project cannot yet be evaluated; the mainstreaming of gender issues achieved limited but clear successes at the individual, team, and institutional levels.

4.5.2.3 Environmental

The IR considered the Environmental Component, with its community-based approach, to be the most effective component for addressing gender issues, and concluded that the Environmental Component researchers must be both sensitive to gender-related issues in natural resource management and cognizant of methods appropriate for deriving gender-differentiated data, analyzing data, and judging the implications of the results.

The Participatory Research approach provided a natural "push" for women's involvement in project work, a push supported by IDRC. In the end, however, few of the Environmental Component researchers were women.

By the end of the program, many researchers and partner organizations still regarded gender issues as a somewhat “revolutionary” component of the greater and equally “revolutionary” Participatory Research approach.

Five of the seventeen MBRP reports presented at the Final Workshop were gender-specific. Gender received significant mention in the Environmental Component’s Final Workshop.

4.5.2.4 Summary and Conclusions

The importance of gender to both components was recognized from the very beginning of the program, and methods for addressing gender issues debated regularly by PSC. A consensus on how best to address those issues was never reached, however, and in the end both components were left largely to themselves to address gender in the manner they saw fit. This resulted in the provision to researchers and VEEM managers of gender-related literature, a (limited) focus on gender in training workshops, and the design and implementation in both components of either a gender-specific project or gender-specific project components. Gender-related successes were achieved in both components, but those successes were limited, and biases against gender issues amongst team members remained.

A more disciplined approach by VEEM management (IDRC, MOSTE, PSC) would clearly have improved this situation. Such discipline was not, however, forthcoming after the first eighteen months of the program, resulting in inadequate attention being paid to gender issues in the program’s last two and a half years, and ongoing biases against gender-segregated research. VEEM thus relearned the gender lesson learned six years earlier by VISED.

5 PROGRAM DESIGN AND OPERATION

5.1 Organizational Overview

Implementation of VEEM has been overseen by a PSC, comprised of members of IDRC, MOSTE, CIDA, MPI, IE, and NEA. Each of the two components has had a Component Advisory Committee (CAC), to help develop research projects, monitor implementation, and evaluate and disseminate project results and policy recommendations. PSC and the CACs have been comprised of influential researchers and GOV officials, thus providing a direct link to government policy-makers. Individual research projects have been led by a Team Leader, reporting to IDRC, MOSTE, PSC, and the CACs.

5.2 Program Management and Guidance

5.2.1 Program Steering Committee

PSC, operating by consensus, has had ultimate authority over VEEM, providing strategic direction, approving workplans and individual project proposals, linking researchers to policy-makers, disseminating program results, and coordinating VEEM with other projects and programs in Vietnam. PSC has been composed of the following members:

Dr. Pham Khoi Nguyen (Chairman)
Mr. Thach Can

MOSTE
MOSTE

Mr. Pham Hung Vinh	MPI
Dr. Do Hoai Nam	IE
Mr. Nguyen Khac Kinh	NEA
Dr. Rodney Schmidt	IDRC VEEM Coordinator
IDRC Officer	IDRC
CIDA Officer	CIDA

PSC is generally regarded by its own members, as well as by other VEEM actors, as having carried out its responsibilities. Vice-Minister Nguyen was widely commended in interviews for having played a strong and enthusiastic leadership role, guiding VEEM towards the achievement of its objectives while ably addressing sometimes very difficult and sensitive issues.

Originally planned to meet annually, or more often if required, PSC met very regularly at the beginning of the project, with three formal meetings and one “informal” meeting in the program’s first twelve months. At the third PSC meeting (September 1998), it was decided to reduce the frequency of PSC meetings to two per year. This was done during 1998-1999, after which the regularity of meetings dropped to one per year.

This last reduction appears to have occurred primarily because of difficulties in agreeing upon and fixing PSC meeting dates. Meeting dates would be set, only to be delayed, and re-delayed, with the result that PSC meetings almost by default became annual events. Some of these requests for rescheduling were made by IDRC, including on one occasion because IDRC considered that insufficient progress had been made in the program – a development that might have been considered a good reason for actually *holding* a PSC meeting. MOSTE, however, appears to have been the instigator of most delay requests, a situation that resulted in the generation of doubts amongst other PSC members about MOSTE’s preparedness to discuss substantive program issues and concerns within the PSC forum. A number of senior VEEM members were, in fact, of the opinion that much of the program’s substantive decision-making was being done outside of PSC, with PSC simply being asked thereafter to provide its formal approval of those decisions.

This perspective may simply be a reflection of a divergence in perceptions (cultural and/or socio-political) of the role of PSC meetings, i.e. as a forum for debating and providing direction on important program issues vs. a forum for formally approving direction already discussed in detail in other program management structures. It may also have been influenced by the fact that PSC was limited – of necessity, given the small number of experts from each sector that it could include while still functioning effectively – in its debating and decision-making capacities. In any event, such opinions proved a negative influence upon the functioning of PSC, a situation compounded by the fact that meeting agendas and key documents were often not distributed to PSC members until very shortly before the meetings – a practice not conducive to the holding of substantive debate. Greater clarification at the beginning of the program about fora and procedures for key VEEM decision-making, and increased discipline in abiding by accepted procedures, would have benefited this situation.

It is interesting to note that, at its November 2000 meeting, PSC recognized its own need to improve program management, through strengthened monitoring and review of project activities. This comment was not uncalled for, given that TLCP and TDP were, in November 2000, ten and fourteen months past their respective completion dates, with no end yet in sight. PSC should, indeed, have been more effective in its overall monitoring of the program, an issue discussed in greater detail in Section 5.2.3 below.

In summary, PSC has generally fulfilled its responsibilities as identified, providing positive direction and guidance to the program, albeit sometimes less promptly and effectively than it might have. Differences of opinion on the role, functioning, and influence of PSC and of its individual members have served to make it less effective than it might have been, but, given the socio-political context of Vietnam, and the fact that MOSTE, as the ministry responsible for all research activities in Vietnam, *de facto* has veto powers over all such programs, such differences have perhaps been unavoidable.

5.2.2 Component Advisory Committees

Specific responsibilities of the CACs were laid out in TORs developed during 1998-1999. The development of these TORs took longer than had been anticipated, due largely to time-consuming differences of opinion within PSC on what CAC responsibilities should include. CAC TORs were finally approved at the fourth PSC meeting (March 1999). Specific CAC responsibilities included the selection of appropriate research topics, the following of guidelines established by the PSC, the identification of appropriate researchers and institutes, the inviting of those researchers/institutes to develop and submit proposals, the reviewing of project proposals to ensure that they met the standards defined by the PSC, and the recommending of project proposals to PSC. CACs were to be advisory bodies only, with no management responsibilities.

5.2.2.1 *Economic Component Advisory Committee*

The establishment of an Economic Component Advisory Committee (ECAC) was approved at the second PSC meeting in February 1998. ECAC began functioning almost immediately (without TORs), as its three members were the same three as those from a VISED project's Advisory Group. Membership of ECAC has been:

Dr. Do Hoai Nam (Chairman)	Institute of Economics
Dr. Le Dang Doanh	Central Institute for Economic Management
Dr. Vo Dai Luoc	Institute of World Economy

There is widespread agreement that ECAC has played a positive role in the Economic Component, with ECAC members monitoring project implementation, giving the project teams feedback and advice on their research, and providing results and policy recommendations to policy-makers on an ongoing basis. PSC meeting minutes refer to the very concrete work being done by ECAC, particularly with respect to its effectiveness in influencing high-level policy makers.

Other PSC minutes, however, cast a shadow over this initial assessment, referring to a lack of effective cooperation between ECAC and the projects. A number of VEEM members are also of the opinion that ECAC, particularly early in the program, was not as effective as it might have been, particularly in identifying researchers and institutes and in developing research projects. This perspective appears to have some credence, given the lengthy period of time required to develop the full complement of Economic Component projects.

This situation changed later in the program, however, when the increasingly strong and influential role played by Dr. Nam led to increased ECAC effectiveness. Dr. Nam, as Project Leader of TLCP and TDP, Director of the Economic Component's host institution, a member of PSC, and an individual of great standing within the Communist Party, was well-placed to play such a role.

It has been remarked by VEEM members that, over the life of the program, Dr. Nam has developed a sense of “ownership” of the component, a development that has fostered his increased engagement with the program and contributed significantly to the successes subsequently achieved.

Influential roles have also been played Dr. Doanh and Dr. Luoc. Dr. Doanh, the Advisor to the Minister of Planning and Investment, was the most influential member of ECAC early in the program, ensuring strong links with key policy-makers, and providing guidance to the project teams both on macro-economic issues and on research design and implementation. Dr. Luoc, a member of PMRC, has also provided a direct link to senior policy-makers in GOV, and guided the VEEM project teams on macro-economic issues.

In summary, ECAC has generally fulfilled its responsibilities, albeit more successfully later in the program than earlier. Its membership of three highly-respected researchers, from three separate research institutes, has provided the VEEM project teams with a broad base of expertise upon which to develop, implement, and evaluate research activities. The high standing of the three members has also been key to ECAC’s ability to provide policy-makers with policy recommendations.

5.2.2.2 Environmental Component Advisory Committee

Significant difficulties were encountered in the starting-up of the Environmental Component Advisory Committee (EnCAC). Although approved in principal at the second PSC meeting, ongoing disagreements on the function of the CACs, as well as on the specific membership of EnCAC itself, resulted in the EnCAC TORs not being approved until March 1999. Only thereafter was EnCAC membership finalized – 18 months after program start-up. The three members of EnCAC eventually identified were:

Le Dien Duc (Chairman)	Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies, Vietnam National University
Nguyen Khac Kinh	National Environmental Agency
Nguyen Chu Hoi	Haiphong Institute of Oceanography

More so than with ECAC, there is a lack of consensus on the effectiveness of EnCAC. Although a number of VEEM members interviewed consider EnCAC to have been supportive and helpful, others interviewed consider EnCAC, due to the conflicts of opinion and personality between its members, as well as to their regular lack of participation in component activities, to have contributed little to the effectiveness of the Environmental Component research.

5.2.2.3 Summary and Conclusions

To varying degrees, the two CACs proved effective in carrying out their responsibilities. In the end, the degree of commitment and involvement of their individual members was key to their effectiveness, with members who developed a sense of “ownership” of component activities, or who engaged in component activities on an ongoing basis, proving critical to the successes of the component. Successes were especially marked when those same CAC members enjoyed a position of influence with policy-makers.

In closing, it is worth noting the opinion of a number of VEEM members interviewed, namely, that the CACs should have been comprised exclusively of researchers. This argument clearly has

its merits, particularly given that the one CAC task not specifically research-oriented – the dissemination of VEEM project results and policy recommendations – was already secured to a significant extent through the individuals selected for membership in PSC, as well as through the influence enjoyed by researcher members of the CACs with policy-makers.

5.2.3 Project Teams

5.2.3.1 *Economic Component*

TLCP: execution of TLCP began quickly, with the rapid establishment of the project team, management structures, workplans, and individual work assignments, supported by the establishment of ECAC. Problems were encountered early in the project, however, as a result of differences of opinion between PSC and Dr. Huy, the Team Leader, on the direction in which the project should proceed. This led to CIDA concerns as early as May 1998 that VEEM's Economic Component was "in trouble" – a perception shared by some at IDRC, as well as by a number of Vietnamese counterparts. This perception was reinforced by the fact that, already at this very early stage of the project, Dr. Huy was working full-time for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), leaving him little time to focus on his VEEM responsibilities.

TLCP progressed well, nonetheless, with a literature survey on the trade regime and competitiveness, trade data collection, training workshops, a workshop introducing the project's objectives and approaches to the Vietnamese research community, and the drafting of a number of reports on trade, trade policy, and competitiveness. Already by mid-1998 these reports were gaining significant GOV attention, and the September 1998 and March 1999 PSC meetings generally considered the project "on schedule".

Soon thereafter, however, progress diminished, with repeated commitments from Dr. Huy to produce project workplans and reports coming to naught, and the project effectively stagnating. Increasingly loud concerns were expressed thereafter by a number of VEEM actors, including IDRC which, in December 2000, finally indicated to IE its intention to terminate the project unless high-quality reports were rapidly forthcoming. Dr. Huy was replaced as Team Leader by Dr. Thang in early-2001, after which the project began moving forward again, with project deliverables being produced on (or even ahead of) schedule, younger researchers being brought into the projects' work, and increased coordination being pursued with the other Economic Component projects.

The original completion date for TLCP was February 2000. At the sixth PSC meeting (November 2000), concerns were expressed about the progress of all economic projects, and December 2000 was established as the deadline for TLCP completion, with a Final Report to be issued by March 2001. Work on TLCP continued into 2001, however, with the Final Report not being issued until November 2001.

TDP: TDP began implementation in 1998, and by late-1999 had produced what the PSC was already referring to as "the best available trade database". The original completion date for this project was September 1999 but, as with TLCP, with which TDP shared its Team Leader, the project effectively stagnated. The sixth PSC meeting (November 2000) considered the project's aims to have effectively been achieved, with research outputs and data already disseminated to many government offices and institutes, but with no Final Report or publicly-available database yet produced. A target date of December 2000 was set for the completion of these activities. This did not occur, however, resulting in IDRC stating its intention (December 2000) to close the

project. The project was not closed, however, and, following a change in team leadership, a Final Report and database CD were finalized and made ready for distribution at the November 2001 workshop.

Smaller Economic Component Projects: as identified in various sections above, the execution of the five smaller projects has taken longer than was originally anticipated. Originally scheduled to be completed in late-2001, operational and management delays have pushed back the scheduled Final Report completion date to February 2002, and the date of a Final Workshop to March 2002. Numerous VEEM members involved with the projects have, however, expressed their doubts about the ability of those deadlines to be met.

In summary, all Economic Component projects have taken longer to complete than was originally anticipated. The delays in project completion were particularly glaring in the case of TLCP and TDP, for which the shortcomings in project management present a clear explanation. Less clear is the explanation for why the delays encountered were permitted to continue for so long. Identified as a problem as early as May 1998, Dr. Huy's full-time engagement with UNDP work, and his concomitant lack of engagement with TLCP and TDP, was already, by early-1999, resulting in a lack of productivity. It was not until early-2001, however, that Dr. Huy was finally replaced as Team Leader by Dr. Thang. This leadership issue should have been addressed much earlier, by both PSC and IE, but was not, for reasons perhaps influenced by cultural considerations, as well as by personal and professional considerations linked to the management design of the project and to the institute itself.

In the end, nonetheless, TLCP and TDP both produced results in accordance with their objectives, albeit much later than was planned. Although conclusions and policy recommendations from both projects were being provided to policy-makers as early as 1998, delays in the final completion of the projects cannot be considered insignificant, given that they resulted in the final findings and conclusions, and the trade database itself, not being publicly released until two years after the original target dates. An immediate implication of this delay was that the analyses presented in the Final Reports, based upon what were by end-2001 relatively dated data, were of limited utility – an issue identified at the Final Workshop itself in November 2001.

With respect to the five smaller economic projects, it is still too early to comment on results, although expectations are that the Final Reports will not be of as high a quality as was originally hoped for, due to delays resulting from, among others, team management problems. The new target date of February 2002 is widely regarded as being too early to allow the completion of any significant analysis of data collected. With VEEM's completion date having already been extended twice, however, and the IDRC VEEM Coordinator having left Vietnam in December 2001, the setting of an early completion date for the projects was considered necessary.

Might these delays and management problems have been avoided? Perhaps, but as has already been discussed, cultural and professional considerations in Vietnam can exert influences on management behaviour that might be regarded by others as unproductive, leading to frustrations and delays that, within the context of internationally-funded research projects, might be unavoidable. On the positive side, however, some such delays might be regarded as simply a case of capacity-building in action. Regardless of how they are perceived, such frustrations and delays should be anticipated in planning internationally-funded research projects, and culturally-sensitive strategies devised for addressing them.

5.2.3.2 Environmental Component

As was noted above, MBRP was hosted and implemented by the Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry, in cooperation with four other organizations. Key amongst these were the Hue University of Science and the Provincial Department of Fisheries. Other partner organizations included the Provincial Department of Science, Technology and Environment, the Nha Trang Oceanography Institute, and the Southeast Asian Research Institute.

5.3 Program Monitoring and Reporting

The CA called for the integration of a Performance Review Framework into the ongoing monitoring of VEEM, to measure progress against expected results, performance indicators, and baselines. No such formal framework was ever established, however, leaving monitoring to be carried out by PSC, MOSTE, IDRC, and the CACs through ongoing engagement in program activities and the reviewing of progress reports.

Monitoring was the responsibility of all VEEM members, but particularly of MOSTE, IDRC, PSC, and the CACs. Program and project monitoring were much more lax than they should have been, with IDRC considering itself and others as being only “familiar” with what was happening on the projects. PSC was eventually to recognize its own shortcomings in program/project monitoring, but too late to address effectively some of the project management problems that had already arisen.

In terms of reporting, progress reports were submitted by Team Leaders to IDRC, MOSTE, PSC, and the CACs. These reports were, however, received so irregularly, and often containing so little information, that IDRC, MOSTE, PSC, and the CACs were not always aware of what was going on at the project level. A requirement for more regular and effective progress reporting was therefore introduced, with Team Leaders tasked to submit at least semi-annual reports to the CACs (for forwarding to MOSTE and IDRC). This new requirement did not, however, have the desired effect, as progress reports – when received – were still generally regarded as lacking enough detail to be useful. Team Leaders, when interviewed, themselves agreed that project reporting had been inadequate.

Although shortcomings in both monitoring and reporting did not deal a fatal blow to VEEM, it is clear that many of the management problems encountered in the program – particularly at the team level – could have been avoided through more effective monitoring by MOSTE, IDRC, PSC, and the CACs. Effective monitoring, followed up by appropriate remedial actions, would have avoided many of the delays encountered by VEEM, delays that not only increased the overall cost of the program, but also served to diminish the value of its final results. The called-for Performance Review Framework was, in this respect, sorely missed.

Semi-annual narrative progress reports were also written by IDRC, for submission to CIDA. These are discussed in Section 5.4.2 below.

5.4 Partner Organizations

5.4.1 IDRC

A VEEM Coordinator, Dr. Rodney Schmidt, was based in Hanoi from January 1998 to December 2001. Dr. Schmidt acted as IDRC’s “man on the ground” in Vietnam, as well as the principal interlocutor for VEEM’s Economic Component. Dr. Stephen Tyler, based in Victoria, Canada,

was the principal interlocutor for the Environmental Component. Dr. Schmidt and Dr. Tyler reported to the IDRC office in Singapore, which retained IDRC responsibility for VEEM. The Regional Director at IDRC Singapore was first Dr. Randall Spence, and later Dr. Stephen McGurk.

IDRC has successfully carried out the program management responsibilities identified for it in the CA and other VEEM documentation. IDRC's management of VEEM, and the commitment of its staff to the program, was spoken of very highly by all Vietnamese interviewed. IDRC's focus on capacity-building, its insistence on high standards, and its efforts to ensure good working relationships with its partners were particularly appreciated. IDRC was mentioned by a number of the senior Vietnamese interviewed as being the best international agency with which they had ever worked, and one with which they hoped to continue working in the future.

Challenges in IDRC's management of the program have, nonetheless, been encountered. Key amongst these has been the absence of an IDRC Environmental Component interlocutor in Hanoi. Dr. Tyler has been able to carry out his responsibilities from a distance, but that distance has proven to make coordination with other key VEEM actors less straightforward than the comparable coordination carried out by Dr. Schmidt. Management challenges have also arisen due to the geographical separation of the program and the VEEM Coordinator from the responsible IDRC (Singapore) and CIDA (Canada) offices, although it must be recognized that, within the context of IDRC-CIDA co-funding, such a situation is unavoidable.

It might be argued, of course, that, given IDRC's corporate goal of building local capacities, it might, in fact, have been more appropriate to have no IDRC Hanoi office at all, with IDRC Singapore/Ottawa dealing directly with VEEM researchers and program interlocutors. Pre-VEEM discussions between IDRC and CIDA did not, however, result in this structure being selected, and the subsequent establishment of an IDRC office in Hanoi provided a focal point for IDRC and CIDA staff members in Singapore and Canada.

With respect the IDRC-CIDA relationship, ongoing and significant challenges were encountered by both agencies. These challenges are discussed in further detail below.

5.4.2 CIDA

CIDA responsibility for VEEM resided in the Project Team Leader (PTL), based in Hull, Canada. From 1998 to 2001, the PTL was Claude Goulet. Since mid-2001, the PTL has been Anne-Marie Ready. CIDA representation in Vietnam has been the responsibility of the Canadian Embassy.

CIDA's responsibilities as identified in the CA and other program documentation have all been generally carried out. As indicated above, however, there have been ongoing challenges in CIDA's relationship with IDRC. Although the CA laid out respective responsibilities for the two agencies, differing corporate perspectives on management structures and processes served to complicate the relationship from the very beginning. Many of the problems encountered might well have been avoided had the two agencies engaged in more-focused management discussions in the planning stages of the program. As it was, those problems – not atypical of IDRC-CIDA co-funded projects – served to create a disruptive dynamic between the two agencies throughout the life of the program.

Partly as a result of this dynamic, CIDA informed IDRC early in VEEM that it would retain an arms-length distance from the management of the program. This was to be the position of CIDA

throughout the life of the program, a position that served to minimize disagreements between the two agencies, but which at the same time left CIDA unaware of many important program details, and prevented it from making as significant contribution to the program as it should have.

Amongst the numerous issues of disagreement between the two agencies, that of IDRC's formal reporting to CIDA merits particular mention. CIDA considered IDRC's semi-annual progress reports to be of very limited utility, given their lack of detail and focus on results. CIDA's opinion of IDRC's annual workplans was much the same, with CIDA expecting specific target dates, anticipated results, performance indicators, and work schedules, but receiving little such detail from IDRC which, given its limited control over VEEM activities, felt unable to produce such workplans.

A comparison of the reports and workplans received by CIDA with what the CA called for indicates that CIDA's critiques were not totally unjustified. IDRC's semi-annual progress reports were regularly submitted late (and in one case not at all), limited in content, unfocused on results, lacking in important program information, and often even factually inaccurate. IDRC's annual workplans likewise did not include the called-for content, were submitted late, and were of very limited utility in planning and forecasting future activities, milestones, and deadlines.

Given this lack of effective formal communication between IDRC and CIDA, the two agencies should have strived to ensure between them the establishment of effective informal communications. This did not occur, however, with communications between key managers at CIDA, IDRC, and the Canadian Embassy proving troublesome throughout the life of the program. This situation was compounded at times by a lack of effective communications between the Canadian Embassy and CIDA itself. One result of these flawed communications was that the CIDA PTL was often ignorant of key program developments. A greater effort to ensure more effective inter-agency communications – both formal and informal – should clearly have been made by both agencies.

In the end, it is clear that a more functional IDRC-CIDA relationship would have benefited the VEEM program. As has been stated above, however, differing corporate perspectives habitually make IDRC-CIDA co-funding relationships challenging for both agencies, and in this respect VEEM did not differ from many other such projects.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Measured by the achievement of its objectives, VEEM has been a success, albeit it to greater or lesser degrees in terms of its individual program objectives. The program has designed and executed multi-disciplinary applied-policy research projects, with relevant Vietnamese research institutes participating in program activities, and good intra- and inter-project coordination exercised throughout. Capacity-building of individual researchers has been achieved through the provision of training workshops and ongoing technical assistance, and has resulted in an increased capacity of Vietnamese researchers to design and implement research activities demonstrating a marked improvement in quality and policy relevance over previous efforts. Networking, workshops, and dissemination activities have resulted in extensive peer consultation and review, and in the publicizing of program results in journals, academic fora, and international conferences. The same workshops and dissemination activities, complemented by personal interventions from key VEEM members, have resulted in the presentation of policy recommendations to government policy-makers, many of which have already been incorporated

into government policies, documents, planning frameworks, and decision-making processes. These achievements have together resulted in a significant capacity-building of Vietnamese researchers and research institutes, strengthened Vietnamese research networks (both within Vietnam and internationally), and a demonstrated relevance of policy research to policy-making in Vietnam.

Although not clearly identified as such in the VEEM planning documents, capacity-building of Vietnamese researchers and other VEEM members is widely considered, both within and outside of VEEM, to have been the principal goal – and in the end, the principal achievement – of VEEM. Significant progress has been achieved in developing the capacities of individual researchers in research design, coordination/networking, implementation, and reporting. Individual progress has also been achieved in untargeted areas, including participation in group discussions, liaison with government officials, submission of funding requests to donors, and proficiency with e-mail/Internet. This capacity-building has left Vietnamese researchers and research institutes far more capable of undertaking effective applied research post-VEEM than they were prior to the implementation of the program, and ultimately has resulted in their developing a sense of having something to say on policy-making in Vietnam – an important development in and of itself.

A sense of “ownership” of the program has been key in this respect, with Vietnamese researchers being given ample leeway to develop and implement their research projects. In providing this space to the researchers, IDRC has chosen not always to intervene when problems are identified, in order that the researchers might learn from their mistakes. This practice, although valuable in terms of capacity-building, has contributed to delays in the program, delays that have had a financial cost, as well as a negative impact on the value of some of the program’s final results. This trade-off is perhaps inevitable in any research program with a capacity-building objective, and must be taken into consideration in the design and implementation of such programs.

A key component of VEEM’s capacity-building has been its strengthening of Vietnamese research networks. The strengthening accomplished has been such that VEEM researchers now consider the idea of future research without a networking component almost inconceivable. This perspective, also held by heads of institutes involved in VEEM, bodes well for the future of the research networks, which can and will continue to function as long as key researchers and research institutes in Vietnam give them their support – support that, today, is highly enthusiastic. Long-term sustainability of the research networks is thus anticipated, with further strengthening inevitable if individual researchers’ capacities continue to be strengthened, younger researchers are brought into the networks, and inter-institute dialogue and collaboration are formalized through the regularizing of consultation/coordination meetings.

Linked to the program’s capacity-building objectives, albeit in a sometimes inverse relationship, has been the success of VEEM in demonstrating the relevance of policy research to policy-making. Although obviously limited, the impact of VEEM research upon policy formulation in Vietnam has been clear, with VEEM results finding their way into numerous government policies and decisions. That impact has, however, been diminished somewhat by the program’s capacity-building focus, and also by program/project management shortcomings, both of which have contributed to research of a lower quality and/or utility than might otherwise have been produced. Given these negative influences, the impact actually achieved by VEEM on policy formulation can be regarded as a particular success, albeit a limited one.

In achieving its successes, VEEM has operated within a program design and structure that, although not flawless, has proven generally effective. The inclusion in a single program of two distinct components has not prevented VEEM from achieving significant positive results, although it has served to make overall program management more complex, and to diminish the amount and complexity of strategy formulation and discussion that might have been carried out in PSC. The program's management did, nonetheless, prove reasonably effective, benefiting particularly from the enthusiastic engagement of numerous key individuals, whose commitments to the program proved instrumental to its successes.

Organizational challenges were, nonetheless, encountered, the most significant of which was the ineffective monitoring and reporting exercised by virtually all program agencies and management bodies. This lack of effectiveness, in combination with a tardiness to address major management problems once identified, contributed significantly to program delays and to their attendant financial and research-value costs. Increased attention paid to monitoring and reporting, as well as to internal communications, the functioning of management structures and procedures, and relationship-building (taking into consideration cross-cultural influences), could have helped to avoid some of these challenges.

In conclusion, VEEM has been a program of limited but clear successes. These successes have not been such as to produce a dramatic change in Vietnam's research/policy-making landscape, but still VEEM can serve as a model from which much can be learned about capacity-building, research networking, and the interface between multi-disciplinary applied-policy research projects and policy-making.

IDRC involvement in Vietnam will continue through the Vietnam Economic Research Network project and the CBNRM Project. Possible future channels for research for these or other projects are outlined in Appendix A.

7 LESSONS LEARNED / RECOMMENDATIONS

Program/Project Design, Coordination, and Execution

- 7.1 A lack of knowledge about the Vietnamese research context and institutes resulted in significant delays early in the program's design.

The broader context within which a program is to be implemented must be understood prior to program development. An analysis of the capacities of potential partner institutes must be undertaken, including an analysis of the current and future workloads of key individuals, in order to be confident of the ability of the institute and its key individuals to commit themselves fully to the program.

- 7.2 The absence of clear component visions and strategies resulted in a somewhat haphazard development of individual projects, impacting negatively on the program's ability to coordinate, to network, and to influence policy-makers.

Clear program visions and strategies must be developed and established prior to the design and approval of individual component projects if coordination, networking, influencing of policy-makers, and overall program impact are to be optimized.

- 7.3 The design, execution, and coordination of complementary research projects proved problematic, due to a lack of clarity on the respective roles of various program partners and management bodies.

Roles and procedures for the identification, development, approval, execution, and coordination of projects must be clearly-established and understood by all program partners and management bodies prior to program start-up. Management objectives, procedures, responsibilities, and schedules must also be clearly laid-out and pursued rigorously throughout the life of the program. Effective inter-organizational communications are key to this endeavour, and must be pursued consistently.

- 7.4 Delays were encountered due to too many key research responsibilities being localized in too few individuals. Greater delegation of responsibilities should have been exercised.

Program management should ensure that work taskings are allocated amongst team members in such a manner as to ensure their timely and effective completion.

- 7.5 Data collection and surveys took longer than was anticipated, with final deadlines proving unrealistic.

The time required to undertake data collection and surveys must be determined as accurately as possible, and reflected in project timelines. Socio-political considerations must be taken into consideration in undertaking this determination.

- 7.6 Shortcomings in the addressing of crosscutting themes resulted from a lack of detail in planning documents, and from a subsequent lack of management commitment in pursuing those themes.

Objectives and strategies for the addressing of crosscutting themes must be clearly identified and spelled out in program planning documents. Management structures and procedures for ensuring the ongoing addressing of those themes must be established.

Capacity-Building

- 7.7 Technical assistance and training provided by international experts was key to the successes achieved by the program.

Future research programs should include a significant capacity-building component, including technical assistance and training activities provided by international experts. This technical assistance could include study tours of others countries, as well as the funding of short-term fellowships for researchers at international research institutes; such fellowships might prove particularly valuable if undertaken near the end of the program, when researchers could derive maximum benefit from them.

- 7.8 The value of training workshops was diluted by the participation of too many individuals, from too broad a spectrum of organizations.

Participation in training workshops should be limited to a small number of individuals from the same types of organizations (e.g. all from research institutes, or all from

government), thereby permitting more focused and relevant training than would otherwise be possible.

- 7.9 The program's focus on capacity-building had negative impacts upon other program activities.

When planning research programs that include capacity-building activities, the potential negative impacts of those activities upon other program objectives and activities must be taken into account.

- 7.10 Donors in Vietnam compete for the same researchers and institutes, yet do not ensure that they are not undertaking the same research. This can result in situations where researchers either undertake research duplicating previous efforts, or produce reports that are composites of earlier-completed research/reports. This situation is compounded by a lack of coordination amongst donors in identifying high-priority research required.

Future research programs in Vietnam should be undertaken in close coordination with other donors and research institutes, to ensure that new research does not duplicate research efforts already underway or completed by others, and contributes to a broad-based strategy for a coordinated country research program. The establishment of formal research coordination mechanisms between donors, government, and Vietnamese research institutes should be supported.

Research Networks, Peer Consultation, and Influencing of Policy-Makers

- 7.11 Research networks proved extremely valuable and effective, as a result of the participation of Vietnamese researchers with strong capacities and contacts, the establishment of good coordinating mechanisms within the program, and ongoing technical assistance provided by international experts.

Future research programs in Vietnam should include the establishing/strengthening of research networks as a key objective. Activities should include the identification of key researchers as network participants, the establishment of strong and formal networking mechanisms, the bringing of younger researchers into the networks, and the provision of ongoing technical assistance, as required.

- 7.12 Personal interventions by key program members were the most important conduit for the presentation of policy recommendations to policy-makers. Successes in this respect were greatly supported by the involvement in the program of individuals highly regarded in their respective areas of expertise.

Future research programs should include highly-influential persons within their programming and/or management structures, to maximize possibilities for the successful presentation of policy recommendations to policy-makers.

- 7.13 Undertaking both peer consultation/review and policy recommendation presentation and the same workshop proved of limited utility, making it difficult to have detailed, focused discussions either on technical issues or on policy matters.

Separate “technical” and “policy-making” workshops should be organized, with the appropriate experts invited to each. Timeframes and agendas should permit in-depth, detailed discussions on research findings.

- 7.14 The dissemination strategy focusing on the dissemination of final results was less useful as a means of peer consultation/review and influencing of policy-makers than ongoing dissemination activities utilizing interim reports and results.

Dissemination strategies should focus on activities occurring throughout the life of the program, not solely on the dissemination of Final Reports and data at program-end. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that interim reports and data are of a high quality before they are disseminated. Disseminated reports and documents should, whenever possible, also be published in English. Dissemination strategies should also include provisions for a website for the posting of program reports, data, and documentation.

Program Management and Operation

- 7.15 Inclusion of two tenuously-linked sectoral components within the same program structure did not optimize the effective implementation of either component.

A thorough benefit-cost analysis should be undertaken prior to deciding on the inclusion of separate sectoral components within the same program structure. Alternative organizational and management structures should be analyzed.

- 7.16 Socio-political, cultural, and professional influences had a significant impact on aspects of the program’s management.

Socio-political, cultural, and professional influences that could impact upon program management should be identified during program planning, and responsive mechanisms developed. Recognition and, if possible, the addressing of such factors should be pursued throughout the life of the program.

- 7.17 The lack of a performance review framework, and shortcomings in monitoring and reporting, had an ongoing and significant negative impact throughout the lifetime of the program.

Strict monitoring and reporting regimes must be clearly-established in program planning documents, and implemented conscientiously from the very beginning of the program. Formal monitoring structures such as performance review frameworks are critical in this respect.

Future Research Channels

Following are possible future channels for economic policy and environmental management research in Vietnam. Recommendations on crosscutting research and program activities that could be encompassed by either sector are included at the end of the appendix.

Economic Policy

Economic research undertaken through VEEM has focused principally on trade liberalization and competitiveness issues. The research carried out, the training and capacity-building undertaken, the research networks established, and the relationships with policy-makers strengthened all point to the merits of continuing research focused on trade liberalization and competitiveness issues. This perspective was held by a majority of the individuals interviewed, but not by any of the non-VEEM economists interviewed, who generally considered labour market issues to be most in need of future research in Vietnam. Proposals for future channels for economic research include:

- yearly updates of the TLCP/TDP data and reports. As has been noted in this report, the two projects' Final Reports and database are already considered of limited utility, given the datedness of their data.
- expansion of the original projects, but focusing on the textiles industry and the garments industry separately.
- an examination of tariffs on textiles in Vietnam, and the real competitiveness of the textiles industry.
- expansion of the TDP database to other manufacturing sectors (e.g. electronics).
- expansion of the research on competitiveness to other manufacturing sectors (e.g. electronics).
- identification of the domestic reforms required to address Vietnam's bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, including a possible future agreement with the World Trade Organization (WTO). (It should be noted that there are already many research organizations in Vietnam working on this issue, particularly the possible future accession of Vietnam to the WTO.)
- determination of the linkages between trade liberalization and labour market issues. The capacity of Vietnamese firms to export is influenced at least as much by labour issues as it is by issues of technical efficiency. This research could provide policy-makers with knowledge of the factors that influence firms' decisions on whether to sell domestically or abroad.
- development of a strategy for the replacement in Vietnam of non-tariff barriers by tariff barriers.
- determination of the impact of China's increasing economic power on the Vietnamese economy.
- determination of the impact of trade liberalization on the development of the private sector.
- determination of the impact of trade liberalization on poverty.
- determination of the impact of trade liberalization on the environment.
- an examination of the labour market in Vietnam. How does it really work? What are the linkages between the labour market and poverty? What is the impact of labour mobility/immobility across sectors and regions?
- identification of a strategy for property rights reform. If such reform is not introduced, the significant investment capital available in Vietnam will not be invested.
- determination of the impact of goods mobility issues. Mountainous regions cannot, for example, benefit from liberalization, due to a lack of transport.

- an increased focus on economic issues impacting upon the hinterlands of Vietnam. Unless such research is undertaken, rising geographic economic inequalities may result in GOV introducing deliberate economic distortions in order to develop those areas.
- identification of strategies for infrastructure development.

Environmental Management

Environmental management research undertaken through VEEM has concentrated on strategies for sustainable coastal resource exploitation using community-based natural resource management methods. This research has examined the impact of existing patterns of exploitation on natural resources, and has identified improved patterns that increase productivity while ensuring the viability and long-term sustainability of the resources. The research produced, the training and capacity-building undertaken, the research networks established, and the relationships with policy-makers strengthened by VEEM all seemingly point to the obvious merits of continuing the research focus in this area. Proposals for future channels of environmental management research include:

- selection of a limited number of coastal zone management groups to work alongside a broader regional coastal zone management network.
- continuation of selected of the nine small community-based resource management projects, through IDRC's CBNRM project.
- increased implementation of 'demonstration' projects at local levels. (MBRP has demonstrated that such projects can have a significant impact on the way in which governments perceive rural development.)
- streamlining of coastal zone projects with other donors, stakeholders, and international development agencies.
- networking of the users of natural resources.
- increased utilization of the Participatory Research approach, focusing on commune and household levels.

Future environmental management research could also move beyond research on coastal zone management to undertake research on, for example, mountainous and highland regions.

Crosscutting Research and Program Activities

Proposals for crosscutting research and program activities that could be encompassed by research in either sector include:

- capacity-building of individual researchers, both in-country and overseas.
- strengthening of key research institutes, to reinforce their positions as key advisors to government.
- establishment/strengthening of research networks feeding into policy-making offices at all levels of government.
- increasing the involvement of Masters-level students in research teams.
- increasing the emphasis on dissemination of data and reports, particularly via the Internet.
- establishment of a research resource and dissemination center, to gather relevant Vietnamese and international research materials for the use of the Vietnamese research community, and to actively promote Vietnamese research outputs. (The establishment of such a center has already been discussed between VEEM, the National Economics University, and FF. FF is reportedly still interested in establishing such a center.)

- ongoing research on gender issues, emphasizing the use of the large, representative, high-quality, available official datasets. Vietnam is now at a stage of “awareness creation” in terms of gender, a stage that, in a society lacking broad fora of public debate, makes the role of research and data analysis an important one.
- strengthening of focus on gender issues and components.
- strengthening of focus on the environmental impacts of projects.

Program Evaluation: Terms of Reference

VEEM has been underway since October 1997, and is due for completion in March 2002. An evaluation of the program, sponsored by the three supporting organizations, MOSTE, CIDA and IDRC, will be conducted in the fall of 2001, during planned workshops of the economic and environment components of VEEM, respectively. The purpose of the evaluation is to:

- assess the extent to which VEEM is achieving its objectives
- assess the effectiveness of the design and operation of VEEM
- describe and assess the structure and vitality of the research networks created by VEEM
- identify key channels for VEEM-sponsored research to influence policy in Vietnam

The evaluation team will consist of three people, a CIDA nominee who will lead the team, and an independent expert in each of environment and economic research components.

The evaluation team will proceed by reviewing program and project documents, attending workshops, and interviewing key personnel at program and project sites, at host institutions, and among concerned policy-makers and government bodies.

VEEM Program Objectives

The expected outputs, outcomes, and impacts (having local, middle-range, and broad effects, respectively) of the VEEM program are as follows:

Outputs

1. Design a series of complementary research projects to support policy for economic reform and environment management;
2. Execute individual projects by coordinating the research activities of numerous institutions, using a multi-disciplinary approach;
3. Engage international experts to train Vietnamese researchers and improve the quality of research design and research results;
4. Undertake peer consultation and review in research and policy debate, both in Vietnam and in the region; and
5. Make policy recommendations and present them to policy-makers.

Outcomes

1. Introduce strategic coordination of policy research and development;
2. Strengthen the ability of researchers, institutes and policy-makers to do research to support policy development;
3. Strengthen research networks; and
4. Conduct research leading to policy recommendations for economic reform and environmental management.

Impact

Increase Vietnam's ability to design and implement effective economic reform and environmental policy.

Persons Interviewed

Canadian Embassy, Hanoi

Claude Goulet, Second Secretary (Development)

Canadian International Development Agency

Bob Johnston, Director, Mainland South-East Asia Division

Anne-Marie Ready, Development Officer

Haiphong Institute of Oceanography

Pham Dinh Trong

Institute of Economics

Do Hoai Nam, Director

Institute of Market and Price Research

Nguyen Thang, Economist

Institute of World Economy

Vo Dai Luoc, Director

Le Bo Linh, Vice-President

Bui Quang Tuan, Economist

International Development Research Centre

Randall Spence, Senior Economist, IDRC London

Stephen McGurk, Regional Director, IDRC Singapore

Rodney Schmidt, VEEM Coordinator, IDRC Hanoi

Stephen Tyler, CBNRM Team Leader, IDRC Victoria

Ministry of Planning and Investment

Phan Thu Huong, Director, Department of Science, Education, and Environment

Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment

Pham Khoi Nguyen, Vice-Minister

Multilateral Trade Policy Assistance Programme

Carolyn Gates, Consultant

National Economics University

Vu Quoc Huy, Economist, Institute for Economic and Development Studies

Adam McCarty, Economist

Nha Trang Fisheries University

Ta Khac Thuong

Ninh Thuan Fisheries Department

Nguyen Khac Lam, Director of Fisheries Promotion Center

University of Agriculture and Forestry, Ho Chi Minh City

Tran Van Phat

VEEM International Experts

Bernard Decaluwé (Université Laval, Canada)

John Cockburn (Université Laval, Canada)

Remco Oostendorp (Free University, The Netherlands)

Patricia Alexander (University of Manchester, The United Kingdom)

Gary Newkirk (Dalhousie University)

World Bank

Kazi Matin, Chief Economist in Vietnam

Tran Thi Thanh Phuong, Environmental Specialist

Others

Claude Potvin, ex-Director of the Canadian Cooperation Office, Hanoi

Families living in the Dam Nai area, Tien Lang District, and the Can Gio mangrove forest

Abstracts of VEEM Projects

Economic Component Projects

The Economic Component of VEEM has focused on research on trade liberalization policies in Vietnam, the nature of the adjustment and benefits facing Vietnam as it opens its borders to trade, efficient policies for achieving liberalization, and Vietnam's ability to compete in world markets. This research has occurred at both the macroeconomic level and at the level of sectors and firms.

1. Trade Liberalization and Competitiveness in Vietnam

This project studied the international competitiveness of the Vietnamese economy at macroeconomic, sector, and firm levels, and the likely impact of Vietnam's program of trade liberalization on the economy. The project described and quantified current trade policy in Vietnam, the impact of trade policy on production incentives, and the necessary adjustment of individual firms, sectors, and the macro-economy to global competition following trade liberalization.

2. An International Trade Database for Vietnam

This project was a companion to the "Trade Liberalization and Competitiveness" project. This project gathered, organized, and integrated needed macroeconomic and sectoral trade and output data for the Trade Liberalization and Competitiveness in Vietnam project. It also made the resulting trade and output database accessible and available for the general public. Subsequent projects may address shortcomings in data collection and statistical methodologies used at the General Statistics Office and identified by this project.

3. Foreign Direct Investment and the Development of Manufacturing Industry in Vietnam

There is yet no systematic study of the impact of foreign direct investment on the structure of the Vietnamese manufacturing sector. This study aims to fill that gap, ten years after the beginning of significant foreign direct investment (FDI) flows into Vietnam. The study does two things: i) create a database of FDI flows into the manufacturing sector, to document aspects such as the overall magnitude of FDI flows relative to total investment, countries of origin and sectors and regions of destination, types of enterprises receiving FDI, including ownership structure and type of flows; and ii) analyze the data, addressing issues such as determinants of FDI flows, and their impact on the structure of manufacturing industry, employment, international trade, and technology transfer.

4. Productivity Analysis for Some Industries in Vietnam

Recent events in Vietnam following the Asian Crisis have raised questions about whether the country's growth pattern is sustainable. The macro-economy is showing signs of imbalance, and there is growing evidence of widespread inefficiency, especially in the state sector. This project uses productivity analysis to formally and systematically measure efficiency, at both microeconomic (firms) and macroeconomic levels. The attempts at such measurement to date have relied mainly on simple accounting indicators, which are of doubtful accuracy. The project measures both quantitative and qualitative aspects of efficiency, focusing on the textiles/garments and cement sectors, and on differences between state and private sectors.

5. The Role of the Private Sector in Trade in Vietnam

The private sector accounts for a significant share of economic activity and employment in the Vietnamese economy as a whole, but its share of external trade activity remains small. The absence of the private sector from trade activity has important implications for the response of the Vietnamese economy to the Asian Crisis and to trade liberalization. This project systematically documents the extent and nature of private involvement in production of tradables, and studies the determinants of that involvement relative to the conditions of participation of other forms of enterprise ownership.

6. Impact of the Asian Financial and Currency Crisis on the Vietnamese Economy

This project makes a preliminary assessment of the impact of the Asian Crisis on the Vietnamese economy. The project reviews the causes of the Asian Crisis, the channels of impact on the Vietnamese economy resulting from linkages between Vietnamese and regional economies, and the Vietnamese policy response to the crisis. It then focuses on the impact of the crisis and policy response on trade and foreign direct investment in Vietnam.

7. Female Workers of Vietnam's Garment and Textile Industry in the Context of Trade Liberalization

This project studies the determinants and conditions of female participation in the garments and textiles labour market in Vietnam, emphasizing barriers or opportunities particular to women. It addresses the possible structural segmentation of the labour market by enterprise ownership and by formality of organization, and the nature of the various links between identifiable segments. The project also studies the impact of trade liberalization and the Asian Crisis on organization of production in the textiles and garments sector and on female participation, in both absolute terms and relative to men. This includes the gender implications of the adjustments Vietnam needs to make to compete effectively in international markets. It also addresses some of the broader social implications for women of the conditions of their participation and of the impacts of trade liberalization and the Asian Crisis.

Environmental Component Projects

The Environmental Component of VEEM concentrated on strategies for sustainable coastal resource exploitation. Using "Community-based Natural Resource Management" methods, it examined both existing patterns of exploitation and their impact on natural resources, and improved patterns that increase productivity while ensuring the viability and long-term sustainability of resources.

1. Management of Biological Resources in Tam Giang Lagoon

This project consisted of nine integrated multi-disciplinary studies focused on the single problem of over-exploitation of the lagoon system. These studies were of the:

- a. nature of important species with respect to their ecology, distribution, and migration;
- b. social structure and methods of fishing activity;
- c. effects of rapidly expanding aquaculture development;

- d. ways of increasing productivity and income from aquaculture ponds;
- e. potential of community-based natural resource management as established in trials;
- f. potential to improve farm productivity and incomes by introducing new crops and technologies;
- g. capacity of women in villages around the lagoon to increase animal production;
- h. potential to increase planting for and care of trees, to improve incomes, environmental quality, and water management in sandy areas around the lagoon; and
- i. potential for women to improve marketing and processing of fishery products.

2. Participatory Assessment of Integrated Resources Management at Estuarine Coastal Land of Ganh Rai Bay

Industrialization and capitalization is having serious impacts on the wetlands and estuarine coastal land of Ganh Rai Bay. This project focused on issues of the integrated management of wetlands and coastal resources that are negatively affected by industrialization and urbanization in this area. The project did not simply study industrial pollution, but wanted to know how coastal resources could be effectively managed to enable an adequate combination between a proper protection and exploitation of wetlands and coastal resources and industrial development.

3. Environmental Management of Coastal Aquaculture in Xuan Dai Bay and Dong Bo Field Through the Best Cooperation Amongst Resource Users

In this project, the researchers identified factors in recent reductions in lobster yield in Xuan Dai Bay, and the loss of mangrove forests and the increase in pollution resulting from the culture of tiger shrimp in the estuary of Cua Be River. The researchers worked closely with all communities involved, to create an awareness of the problems and to devise policies and practices to ensure the resources are used in a sustainable manner for the benefit of all.

4. Assessment of Environmental Changes and Related Activities on Xuan Thuy Ramsar Site Since Its Foundation in 1989

In the northern part of Xuan Thuy District lies a 12,000 ha RAMSAR-designated wetland of international importance as waterfowl habitat. In 1995, the government designated 5,600 ha of this area as a Nature Reserve. Local people are allowed to engage in traditional aquaculture, marine product gathering, and grazing of domestic animals. Through this project, the researchers assessed the impact of these activities on the Xuan Thuy Reserve. They evaluated the management of the reserve since its designation, and made recommendations for improving it. Researchers also examined experiences with livelihood diversification to assess the reduction in pressure on the reserve.

5. Study on Community-Based Aquaculture – Mangrove Integrated Farming for Sustainable Uses and Management of Coastal Environment and Resources in Ca Mau Province

Researchers at the Can Tho University Institute for Marine Aquaculture identified the current shrimp culture practices in mangrove areas of Ca Mau Province, at the southern tip of Vietnam, and the effect they are having on the mangrove, on the coastal ecosystem as a whole, and on the socio-economic conditions of the local population. Using a participatory approach that identified gender-distinct resource-use characteristics, they developed

sustainable community-based farming models, along with indicators to monitor their sustainability. Recommendations were then taken to government for changes to, or strengthening of, policies and strategies on coastal resources and their management and use.

6. Preliminary Assessment of Public Participation in Mangrove Forest Management Through Land Allocation and Forest Care Policy in Can Gio District, Ho Chi Minh City

Recently rapid population growth, low incomes of coastal communities, and extensive development of shrimp culture have resulted in overexploitation and destruction of mangrove areas in Vietnam. Much of the mangrove in the Can Gio district of Ho Chi Minh City was destroyed by defoliant during the Vietnam War. In 1990, the city implemented the Land Allocation and Forest Care Contract Policy, where local people contract to act as forest stewards. They have the right to use the water inside the forest for aquaculture, they share forest products during periodical thinning and final harvesting, and they receive allowances for forest care. The researchers of the College of Agriculture and Forestry worked closely with the local people to carry out an assessment to see how well this policy is working, and provided the results to local and national policymakers.

7. Study on Biodiversity Protection of Tidal Wetlands in Haiphong

The tidal wetlands of Tien Lang District, Haiphong City provide habitat for a great variety of plant and animal species *in situ* and for migratory waterfowl as staging and wintering habitations. They also serve as natural buffers against coast flooding, erosion, and storm wave damage. However, like other coastal areas in Vietnam, the tidal wetland and marine coastal eco-systems are being degraded rapidly. Economic development and poor management in these areas increasingly threaten biodiversity and sustainability of tidal wetland resources. Through this project, the researchers documented and gained understanding of the tidal wetland biodiversity in Haiphong and the exact nature and extent of the threats to it. They presented their findings, and made recommendations, to local communities and to national level decision-makers responsible for the National Plan on Biodiversity Protection and National Strategy on Wetland Conservation and Management.

8. Protection of Aquatic Resources at Hoang Mai River Estuary Through Participatory Management

In this project, the Research Institute for Aquaculture No. 1 studied the aquatic resources of Hoang Mai River in Nghe An Province, and how they are linked to exploitation activities by the communities, in order to build up awareness and capacity in the fishing communities for resource management and environmental protection. The focus was on engaging the communities in helping to identify problems, to understand their environmental systems better, and to develop interventions jointly with the researchers to improve the sustainability of resource use.

9. Solutions to the Problem of Retrogression of Environment and Hydrobiological Resources at Nai Swamp in Ninh Thuan Province

The Nai Swamp in Ninh Thuan Province is traditionally the most productive shrimp culture area in Vietnam, and an important source of income for the population of the five communities located in or bordering the Nai estuary. There are concerns that the estuary's resources are being stressed by overexploitation. Diseases affecting shrimp and other aquatic resources are increasing in severity with devastating impact on people's livelihood. The

researchers at Nha Trang Fisheries University assessed the effect of shrimp culture and exploitation of other living aquatic products such as mollusks on water quality and the estuary's eco-system. Water quality effects from surrounding agricultural uses were also examined. Researchers measured the species and abundance of benthic and plankton resources, and compared them with data available on these resources from 1987 to 1997. The chemicals and antibiotics used to control shrimp disease are also thought to have an impact on the eco-system and these were measured and analyzed. Using a participatory approach that respects gender-distinct resource-use characteristics, the researchers worked with the communities to formulate resource management recommendations for the long-term sustainable exploitation of this important area.